MODERN INDIA

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First Published May, 1927.
Printed in Great Britain.

Printed by THE DORRIT PRESS, LTD. (T.U. throughout),
68-70 Lant Street, Borough, London, S.E.1.

"*The Indians will not reap the fruits of the elements of the new society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the present ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Indians themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether.*"—KARL MARX, "Future Effects of British Rule in India." (1853.)

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Preface to the English Edition

THE present book was originally written for an Indian publisher, and published in India in the spring of 1926. The text has been revised for the present edition, and notes on certain points of information added which might be useful for English readers.

The subjection of India is one of the strongest bases of English capitalism. Of the 450 millions of the British Empire, 320 millions are Indian. Historically, the plunder of India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one of the principal sources of primitive accumulation which made the development of capitalism in Britain and the industrial revolution possible. In the nineteenth century India was the principal market for British manufactures. In the twentieth century India is becoming rapidly industrialised under the control of British capital, which, with the aid of a gigantic irresponsible bureaucratic machine, unparalleled since Tsarist Russia, and semi-slave conditions of labour, is finding more profitable fields of exploitation than at home. To-day one-tenth of the British export trade goes to India—more than to any other country—and representing 70 per cent. of Indian imports, although already a diminishing

amount owing to the development of manufactures in India. British investments in India are estimated at one thousand million pounds, or more than the total in all the Dominions put together. This role of India in British capitalist economy is relatively increasing, in proportion as the control of the Dominions and hold on foreign countries are weakening. The control of India is the keystone of British Imperialism.

The importance of the Indian national struggle in the world fight against Imperialism is thus sufficiently obvious. It is not only a question of three hundred millions, or one-fifth of the human race, struggling for freedom from foreign domination, which is the necessary first step to social freedom. It is also the question that here in India and in China are the two decisive areas of the national struggle against world Imperialism, and that in the present epoch the international working class cannot free itself by purely local struggles in the home territory without at the same time overthrowing the Imperialist domination of subject nations which is to-day the strongest basis of modern capitalism. For this reason the fortunes of the Indian national struggle are of vital concern to the international working class.

At the present day, for the British working class, Indian developments—always in fact closely linked up with their fortunes—have come to the front as of vivid and immediate concern for an additional reason. Previously, the subjection and poverty of the Indian masses was one of the concealed bases of the higher standards of the British workers. To-day an opposite process is developing with

extreme rapidity. The industrialisation of India under British control—to-day India is officially classified as one of the eight leading industrial nations of the world—means that British capital, in proportion as the home position becomes difficult, is using its control of cheap labour in India to open up enterprises there and undercut the British workers, and then on the basis of this competition to lower wages at home. This process began in the jute industry, the greater part of which has been transferred from Dundee to India during the past half century; signs of similar tendencies are visible in iron and steel, engineering and other directions. In consequence, the hastening of Indian emancipation and the weakening of British dominion in India have become an urgent and immediate concern for the British working class; and every day this alliance of interest is becoming more widely understood.

To understand the problems of the Indian national struggle, it is necessary to understand something of the essential conditions of the situation. The mass of the Indian people, the peasants and industrial workers, constituting nine-tenths of the population, are held at present under a double yoke. There is first the imperialist domination of the British bourgeoisie, who control the apparatus of government and subject the people to the exploitation of large-scale British capital through the mechanism of taxation, finance and banking, loans and debt, the ownership of the railways, of the greater part of the industrial enterprises, of the plantations and mines, and the operations of the large importing companies. Then in addition there are the Indian landlords and bourgeoisie,

ruling princes, merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, small traders and moneylenders, who prey upon the people under the aegis of the British Government and exact their share of the spoils. From this double yoke, arresting social development, follows the intense poverty and misery of the mass of the Indian people, who have been reduced to the lowest level of any country in the world.

The imperialist domination holds autocratic control of the whole apparatus of government. The Viceroy and his Council are appointed by the British Government and are responsible only to the British Parliament; the one day a year debate devoted to Indian affairs in the British Parliament is a notorious farce, in which all parties (including nowadays the official Labour Party) combine in declaring their approval of the beneficence of British rule in India; thus the effective rule is the unchecked rule of the Indian Civil Service, an all-powerful bureaucracy beyond appeal, working under the general leadership of the Imperialist Government in London.

Since the war there have been introduced "Constitutional Reforms" which are intended to throw dust in the eyes. There is a "Legislative Assembly" without any power; legislation which it passes can be vetoed through the bureaucratically nominated "Council of State"; measures which it refuses to pass, whether of financial or other character, can be "certified" by the Government as necessary for "peace, order and good government"; one-third of this Assembly is officially nominated; the remaining two-thirds are elected by an electorate of property owners and university graduates, numbering less than one million or 0.3 per cent. of

the population. In the provinces there are Provincial Assemblies with puppet " Ministers " in certain special subjects, such as health and education, where the odium of official parsimony can thus be transferred to Indian shoulders, while all financial and executive power is retained in official hands (this is the system described as " Dyarchy " or the " sharing of rule "). It will be seen that all this camouflage of so-called " progressive self-government " is of no concern to the masses of the Indian people, and represents only a very cautious attempt of the British bureaucracy to draw in an infinitesimal upper stratum of the Indian population into the tasks of British administration.

The Indian upper classes, the ruling princes, landlords and bourgeoisie, exist under the protection of the British bourgeoisie as subordinate sharers in the spoil. The ruling princes are puppets, surviving from a decaying feudal order, and artificially maintained by the British as buttresses of reaction. With rare exceptions, they are reactionary, parasitic, devoted to their British masters and hostile to all Indian aspirations. The landlords have been in large part created as a class by the British, who in the past established a landlord system where there was none, in order to provide a basis for their rule. The Indian bourgeoisie, of merchants and manufacturers, have risen more recently on a larger basis, and at first in opposition to the British to whom they were rivals; but they have been increasingly drawn closer to the British bourgeoisie, both by the attractive power of large capital, and by the need of governmental protection against mass discontent. It is from these upper classes that are drawn the rich Indian para-

sites who come to spend their wealth in Europe, or play the flunkey at royal functions and Imperial Conferences, and who by their wealth and extravagance blind the eyes of the British workers to the grinding misery of the Indian peasants and workers.

This is the double exploitation which is the root cause of the intense poverty of the mass of the Indian people. A horde of witnesses, official and unofficial, has given evidence of this poverty and misery without parallel, and the literally starved condition of millions upon millions and even the majority of the population. Occasional startling occurrences, like the influenza epidemic after the war, which carried off thirteen million lives, reveal the general physical condition. It is revealed no less in letters of fire in the mortality statistics : in the highest death-rate in the world ; the average expectation of life of the Indian is twenty-two years, as compared with the Japanese forty-four years and the Englishman's fifty-three years. All these conditions have actually worsened during the most recent period of British rule : the death-rate has risen from 24 per thousand in 1882 to 31 in 1921, and the expectation of life diminished in the same period from 30 to 22 years. Thus the " progressive " capitalist advance of the most recent period has resulted in intensified exploitation and misery. Starvation, overcrowding, debt, illiteracy, lack of health facilities, child-labour—these are the slave conditions of the Indian people.

The conventional explanations of this poverty—the explanations of " over-population " and so forth—are completely false, when examined in relation to the facts. This is dealt with in the

early chapters of the present book, where the real reasons of Indian poverty under imperialist domination are considered.

This double yoke under which the Indian people are held makes also the exceptional difficulty of their fight to free themselves. They have to fight both the imperialist exploiters and their own exploiters, and in fact increasingly a united front of both. To free themselves, they have first to overthrow the imperialist exploiters who hold the power of government. This struggle against imperialist rule is the "national" struggle or struggle for national liberation. (The common argument that India is "not a nation" is a play on words. The single imperialist domination makes the single national struggle for the Indian people. The fact of divers races and religions is only part of the difficulties conditioning this struggle, but not rendering it unnecessary, any more than the divisions of colour and language of the workers in the United States makes the unity of the American working class unnecessary. In point of fact, the imperialist centralised rule and capitalist unification have created the inevitable social conditions of Indian unity.)

But in this national struggle arises the problem of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Indian bourgeoisie has played a double role. On the one hand they naturally grudge the lion's share of the imperialist exploiters and their own inferior position; and would not be averse to securing the whole spoils themselves, if that were possible, or at any rate to making use of popular agitation to secure a better bargain for themselves. On the other hand, if there is any sign of a popular movement really

developing, such as would inevitably endanger also their own privileges and position, they at once draw in their horns and hasten to the side of the imperialist bourgeoisie and to its guns for protection. Thus the Indian bourgeoisie step forward on the one hand as the true spokesmen and representatives of the national cause, calling on the people to follow them in the name of national unity and freedom and forget all class distinctions. But as soon as a crisis comes and their property is endangered, they speedily sacrifice the national cause to their class interests, and line up with the imperialists in a common counter-revolutionary front. This treacherous role of the Indian bourgeoisie gives rise to the essential problem of the Indian national movement at the present point.

The Indian Nationalist Movement has up to the present been led by the bourgeoisie, by lawyers and wealthy men representing the merchants and mill-owners, and financed from these; although the bulk of the movement has consisted rather of petty bourgeois elements, clerks, journalists, schoolmasters, small traders, students and unemployed literates, all with a much stronger sense of grievance against British rule, but without an effective outlet. Up to the war the Nationalist movement was never very strong; but in the years after the war gigantic mass unrest developed throughout India which swept forward the national struggle (ten millions joined the National Congress; tens of thousands went to prison). Peasant movements and industrial strikes were widespread. For a while the fate of the Empire was in the balance; the Government feared to arrest the leaders of the movement, although these were openly calling to revolt. The mass movement

followed with devotion, confidence and trust the Nationalist leadership, represented by Gandhi, who at this time denounced the Empire as "satanic," called on his followers to revolt and break its laws, and promised them Swaraj (or Self-Rule) in twelve months. But the movement rapidly passed beyond the bounds endeavoured to be set it, and showed its social character : not only were British rule and the police attacked, but rent was refused to be paid to the landlords and strikes developed against the capitalist employers. At this the Nationalist leadership publicly called a stop the whole movement, by the famous Bardoli decisions of February, 1922. This calling off, which is comparable in Indian national history to the calling off of the General Strike in May, 1926, in British working class history, was declared to be in the name of "non-violence"; but a closer examination of the facts surrounding the decision soon shows that the plea of "non-violence" was in reality a very thin disguise for the class interests of the property owners. This historic treachery of the Indian bourgeoisie broke the back of the national revolt after the war. From the moment of the calling off, the Government struck without mercy, and since then reaction and terrorist repression have raged unchecked in India.

From that time the whole Nationalist movement has been in collapse. The Indian bourgeoisie is today a counter-revolutionary force : they fear the social revolution that would follow on national independence more than they desire independence; and therefore they have made their terms with the imperialists and are all supporters of the Empire. The imperialists have baited the hook with tariffs,

industrial development and promises of gradual constitutional reforms. The Swaraj Party, which has inherited the dwindling remains of the old Nationalist movement, to-day advocates Dominion status within the Empire, practically confines its activities to the narrow limits of the Legislative Assembly, and draws closer and closer to open co-operation with the Government. Its leadership is broken up : and group after group passes over to open co-operation with the Government, to submergence in the pro-Government "Liberal Party" or " Independent " groups, or to the formation of new " Responsive Co-operation " groups and parties. The rank and file is left bewildered and discouraged; occasional Provincial Conferences which have carried repudiations of the leadership and demands for a programme of full independence and an active policy, have revealed the discontent; but it has not yet found an outlet; and membership and agitation are at a low ebb. The mass forces of unrest, still powerful below the surface, have been canalised off into self-destructive and senseless communal (inter-religious) strife, deliberately fomented—despite hypocritical expressions of disapproval—by both the British Government and the bourgeois Nationalist leaders. Such is the unhappy condition of Indian politics to-day.

From this stagnation and decay, only a new National movement, based on the workers and the peasants, and with a political and social programme expressing the interests of the masses, can bring new life. The conditions for this are ripe. The exposure of the Indian bourgeoisie and their impotence for national leadership is complete. The discontent of the petty bourgeois elements,

at present stifling for expression, will inevitably find their scope and expression in union with the masses of the people. Working class organisation and struggle has begun and developed with extreme rapidity during the past half dozen years. Episodes such as the North-Western Railway Strike and the Bombay Mill Lock-out last year have shown the strength, sacrifice, militant courage and solidarity of the Indian working class. The Indian workers (there are already two million industrial wage workers, and their number is quickly increasing, and they are concentrated above all in large industry in a few big towns and centres) are rapidly showing themselves the leading political force of the coming stage in India. It is they who, in alliance with the peasants, will build up the Indian Commonwealth of the future.

The Chinese example, and the great advance of the Chinese national struggle during the past two years, should help to show the way forward for India. It is true that the bourgeoisie in China, being brought into direct rivalry with the foreign interests by the unequal treaties, is more ready up to the present to adopt a militant role, and elements of it are in direct sympathy with the national struggle. But the strength of the Kuomintang, the Chinese National Party, lies in the extent to which it bases itself on the masses, on the workers, the peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie (it is a federal body, gathering within its ranks working class organisations—including the Communist Party—peasant organisations, students' groups, etc.), and on a progressive social programme expressing the interests of the mases. The triumphant success of the Kuomintang in China carries a great lesson for India which will not be lost.

With such a mass national movement the British working class movement can and should act in alliance. For this purpose a great change is needed in British working class policy in relation to India. The present official Labour policy is in practice on the side of the Imperialists. It needs to be brought on to the side of the Indian people.

The record of the official leadership of the British Labour Movement in relation to India has not been a good one. The policy of Imperialism has ruled here as elsewhere. British rule in India is accepted as a kind of divine right which no Indian may gainsay ("the right of British statesmen, public servants, merchants and industrialists to be in India to-day is the fact that they have made the India of to-day"—so Lord Olivier, the "Labour" Secretary for India in the House of Lords, on February 26th, 1924). Indian unrest is met with the unconcealed brandishing of the mailed fist ("No party in Great Britain will be cowed by threats of force"—MacDonald's message to India at the outset of his Premiership, a message which received the praise of Chamberlain as worthy of the old Tory Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury). The Indian masses, struggling desperately for the barest means of existence, and faced with an iron despotism, are solemnly adjured by the National Joint Council of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, at the very height of the crisis in the beginning of 1922, to take their grievances to those "Parliamentary institutions recently conferred on India, by means of which grievances should be ventilated and wrongs redressed"—these "Parliamentary institutions" being the mockery of a Legislative Assembly without power based on an

electorate of the one three-hundredth uppermost stratum of the population, which is actually held out to the masses as their hope by a "Labour" committee!

It will be seen that in all these expressions India is simply seen through Tory official spectacles, and the Indian masses do not come into the picture. The British Labour statesmen completely identify themselves with British capitalist interests in India; they adjure the masses to be patient and docile, and not to think of independence; if they are good, they may receive reforms at their masters' pleasure; if not, there is the prison cell and the machine gun to hold them under. This complete unity with the bureaucracy produced its inevitable result in the record of the Labour Government in India in 1924.

The Labour Government, instead of using every effort to help forward the struggle of the Indian masses acted instead as the spokesman of the bureaucracy against them, and even introduced new measures of repression. By the Cawnpore Trial, the Communists in India were sentenced to heavy terms of penal servitude, not even for Communist propaganda, but simply for advocating Indian independence—in the words of the Labour Under-Secretary, "to deprive the King of the sovereignty of British India." In the Bombay strikes, the strikers were left to die of starvation (deaths of strikers from starvation were admitted by the semi-official "Times of India"), and the police were used to fire on the strikers, resulting in killed and wounded. Above all, the Labour Government is remembered in India for its introduction of the Bengal Special Ordinances, estab-

lishing the old Tsarist system of the arrest and imprisonment of political offenders without charge and without trial. It was for this measure that the succeeding Conservative Indian Secretary, Lord Birkenhead, declared that "the whole country, and indeed the Empire, owed a considerable debt to the Labour Government" for its "courage" in introducing it.

Since the Labour Government, the official policy of the British Labour Movement in relation to India has followed even closer lines of unity with the Tory policy. Indian affairs in Parliament are now becoming treated, like foreign policy, as "above party"; so much so, that the present Tory Under-Secretary for India can declare in the House of Commons: "There is really very little difference of opinion between His Majesty's Government and the leaders, at any rate, of the Party opposite."

It is inevitable that the result of this in India has been to create a widespread distrust in the Indian National Movement of the British Labour Party and the British Labour Movement. Evidence of this is abundant in the Indian Press.

The timid approval of "progressive self-government within the Empire" for India, does not in any way diminish the reactionary and bureaucratic character of the whole policy. For this aim of "progressive self-government within the Empire" is exactly identical with the official Government policy, as laid down by the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. The complete emptiness of this policy consists in the fact that, first the actual policy, pending the supposed stages of self-government, is one of coercion and police terrorism, which is given official Labour approval; and second, that the so-

called "self-government within the Empire" does not mean any real independence for India and holds out no hope for the masses of India. This is most clearly seen when the actual form of this supposed "self-government" is considered. The form officially approved by the Labour Party is set out most typically and strikingly in the "Commonwealth of India Bill" which is now before Parliament. This Commonwealth of India Bill was originated by the Imperialist group in India around Mrs. Besant, and has now been officially sponsored by the Labour Party. This Bill would not only leave effective power (foreign policy and military control) in the hands of British Imperialism, but would establish a reactionary constitution with a second chamber and a high property qualification for the electorate of the legislative assembly.

A complete transformation of British working class policy in relation to India is necessary. The existing official Labour policy runs directly counter to every Socialist or working class principle, and for the matter of that even to any democratic principle in the most elementary sense, since it defends the maintenance by force of rule over a subject people, upholds the use of police and military terrorism against this people, and for reform proposes a reactionary constitution which would enfranchise only the upper class one per cent. Such a policy does not represent the real outlook or the real interests of the British working class. It is necessary to break with the Imperialist rule and exploitation as representing the interests and policy of the class enemies of the British workers; and to break also with the reactionary upper class Nationalists with whom alone so far the Labour

leaders have established relations; and to build instead a real working class policy on the basis of the masses of the Indian people.

In the first place, the British Labour Movement should clearly declare its unqualified recognition of the right of the Indian people to govern themselves, and its opposition to any policy of armed force to hold them in subjection. No other policy is compatible with international Socialism. This involves recognition of the right of the Indians to absolute independence, if they wish it. Arguments of an "economic" pseudo-Socialist character are sometimes advanced against this, that it is not in the interests of Socialism to "break up" large-scale economic combinations, that the connection of the British and Indian peoples can be developed on mutually advantageous lines, that it is capable of Socialist development, etc. It is not realised that these arguments are being actually used in favour of a system of capitalist domination and exploitation maintained by military force, and that those who use these "Socialist" arguments are voting for the machine guns to hold down the Indian people. Real productive relations cannot be built on a basis of exploitation, which can only lead to increasing antagonism and conflict. The productive relations of the future can only be built up when the basis of exploitation and domination by armed force is removed.

In the second place, the British Labour Movement should support and help forward the political and social organisation of the Indian masses. It is customary already to speak of the necessity of assisting trade union and labour organisation in India, though very little has yet been done in prac-

tice to carry out these promises with any real help. But there is here a very great danger against which it is necessary to be on guard. This is the danger of regarding the aim of trade union and labour organisation as confined to immediate social and economic reforms within the Imperialist system, and ignoring the supreme political aim of the conquest of power and independence, and the estabishment of a free social republic. Assistance towards an emasculated form of trade union and labour organisation, whose aim is confined to economic objectives "within the Empire," is simply a species of veiled Imperialist propaganda. The British Labour Movement should support and help forward the political and social organisation of the Indian masses, not merely on a programme of limited economic aims, but on a programme of full social and political freedom.

In the third place, the British Labour Movement should fight for full rights of organisation and propaganda for the Indians. The seat of power over India lies in Britain; the responsibility for repression lies there; the fight against repression must take place there. The British Labour Movement should demand the release of all political prisoners, and the abolition of repressive legislation and police rule. They should demand the abolition of the censorship of the Press, of the shackling of the trade unions, and of the vetoing of genuine socialist and communist organisation. They should demand the withdrawal of the military forces in India. And they should carry on an active agitation for these ends throughout Britain.

Only by such a programme and policy, cutting completely separate from the existing Imperialist

domination, can the British workers establish real unity with the Indian people.

In this transformation of British working class policy in relation to India, a very large work of propaganda is needed in order to awaken working class opinion on Indian questions. It is hoped that the present book may assist in this work, and serve to stimulate further inquiry and attention towards Indian problems, which are so closely bound up with the immediate future of the British working class.

R. Palme Dutt

December 1st, 1926.

MODERN INDIA

R. PALME DUTT

Chapter I.

A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Indian National Movement has reached a point at which a new survey is needed of its conditions, aims and tactics. The deadlock reached by the existing movement during the last few years, and the necessity of finding a new line of advance, make this fresh survey of the ground necessary.

The present book is no more than a contribution to such a discussion. Its special endeavour is to bring the national struggle into relation to the whole social struggle of the Indian people.

The experience of every aspect of current world movements and modern developments of world thought need to be brought into close connection with the Indian movement and Indian thought, which has (largely through the policy of the Imperialist rulers) been kept too much in isolation. It is the endeavour of this book to stimulate thought in this direction.

The Indian National Movement was, before the war, an affair of small groups, representing only a very small better-off stratum of Indian society. But since the War it has become a movement of the masses, as the events from 1921 to 1922 showed. Nevertheless, the outlook, the range of ideas, the policy, the forms of organisation, still closely belong to the old basis. A real programme of the masses, a real organisation of the masses, is still to come, and then the Indian National Movement will be able to show its power.

On the other hand, Imperialism since the War has vitally changed its policy, in very skilful adaptation to new conditions. Imperialism has taken in hand the development of capitalism in India, reducing Indian capitalism to a subordinate position. By this stroke, the basis of the old National Movement, which rested mainly on the claims of the rising Indian bourgeoisie, has been destroyed. The policy of modern Imperialism is to win the Indian bourgeoisie into junior partnership, and the eventual expression of this policy will be found in Dominion Status. But this will not mean emancipation for the mass of the Indian peasants and workers from the real burdens of Imperialist exploitation.

The national struggle for independence will have to take new forms. The struggle against Imperialism is and must be a struggle of the widest masses. The awakening of the masses to their own interests and their own emancipation is the task in front.

The national struggle itself is only a stage in the struggle for emancipation. Our fight is a fight against every form of exploitation—economic, social, political, racial, or religious. As the

struggle develops, the leadership of the productive workers of the proletariat in India and the peasants will become more and more clear.

The present stage of the struggle is the struggle against Imperialist domination. But the national struggle itself contains within itself the germs of the developing social struggle, and can only be understood in relation to it. The failure to recognise this, the attempt to build a national movement on the ever weakening prop of the Indian bourgeoisie, the endeavour to combine a forward political movement with a reactionary social programme is at the root of the present weakness of Indian Nationalism.

The national struggle can only be successful in so far as it is the expression of a wide popular movement. It can only be the expression of a wide popular movement, when the aims and programme of the national struggle are the aims and programme of the masses of the people, and the organisation reaches out to the masses of the people. This task raises many problems. It is the hope of this book to endeavour to serve as a contribution to these problems and to this necessary clarification of the National Movement.

Chapter II.

IMPERIALISM IN INDIA—THE OLD BASIS

Imperialist policy in India has entered on a new and important stage since the War. The Industrial Commission of 1916-18, the Montague-Chelmsford Report and "Reforms," and the Fiscal Commission and administrative measures accompanying it, have all been successive expressions of the new policy, which has shown itself in the tremendous influx of British capital into India, for new industrial enterprise, and the penetration of Indian economic life.

The extent and significance of the change has been partly obscured by the specious and illusory character of the so-called "Constitutional Reforms" accompanying it. Nevertheless, the change is of vital importance for the future of the National Movement.

The new policy is driving towards the industrialisation of India under British control and for the profit of British investors. In place of a backward agricultural India, kept backward for the advantage of the forward rulers, is set the vision of an "advanced," "opened-up," "industrialised" India—but equally to be drained and bled, only the more efficiently by the foreign domination and its parasitic agents among the Indians themselves.

This new policy, which is part of the modern world development of Imperialism, is already producing revolutionary changes in Indian social con-

ditions,and transforming the character of the Indian national struggle. But the movement of events is so rapid that it is in danger of outstripping the traditional forms of outlook and thought still current.

In order to judge the significance of the new policy, it is necessary first to grasp clearly the character of the old.

1. British Rule Before the War

What was the old basis of Imperialism in India? This is the first question to ask.

The British came to India as merchants and traders. The process of conquest was only a part of the process, and subordinated to the aim of profit-making. It was, as their own historians have termed it, an "accident." This fundamental economic basis of the British connection with India has continued up to the present day, through all the variations in form. But the variations in the form of the economic exploitation give the key to the successive stages of political development and to the form of the subjection of the Indian people.

It is possible to distinguish three stages of the British connection with India.

In the first stage the British came as merchant adventurers. This was the stage of the East India Company. The line of distinction between trade and plunder was thin; and the profits of the plunder of India, then one of the wealthiest countries in the world, reached fabulous heights. The dividends of the East India Company were commonly 100, 150, and 250 per cent. in a year, apart from the pickings of its individual agents and servants. It was in this process, during a period

of social unrest and disorder in India, that the British were able to lay the basis of their conquest of India with the aid of the Indians themselves (with the aid in fact of the then rising Indian trading classes, and on the ruins of the already tottering feudal regime). Thus, this merchant company, representing British capitalism, became direct ruler of an increasing proportion of India.

The character of this rule has been clearly expressed by the classic economist of the British bourgeoisie, Adam Smith, in his "Wealth of Nations" :—

> "The government of an exclusive company of merchants is perhaps the worst of all governments for any country whatever."
>
> "It is the interest of the East India Company considered as sovereigns that the European goods which are carried to their Indian Dominions should be sold there as cheaply as possible; and that the Indian goods which are brought from there should be sold there as dear as possible. But the reverse of this is their interest as merchants. As sovereigns their interest is exactly the same with that of the country which they govern. As merchants their interest is directly opposite to that interest."
>
> "It is a very singular government in which every member of the administration wishes to get out of the country and consequently to have done with the government as soon as he can and to whose interest the day after he has left it and carried his whole fortune with him, it is perfectly indifferent though the whole country was swallowed by an earthquake."

"Frequently a man of great, sometimes even a man of moderate, fortune is willing to give thirteen or fourteen hundred pounds (the present price of a £1,000 share in India stock) merely for the influence which he expects to acquire by a vote in the Court of Proprietors. It gives him a share, though not in the plunder, yet in the appointment of the plunderers. . . . A man of great or even a man of moderate fortune provided he can enjoy this influence for even a few years and thereby get a certain number of his friends appointed to employment in India, frequently cares little about the dividend which he can expect from so small a capital. About the prosperity or ruin of the great empire in the government of which that vote gives him a share he seldom cares at all. No other governments ever were or from the nature of things ever could be so perfectly indifferent about the happiness or misery of their subjects, the improvement or waste of their dominions, the glory or disgrace of their administration, as from irresistible moral causes the greater part of the Proprietors of such a mercantile company are and necessarily must be."

(Adam Smith, "Wealth of Nations," Book IV., Chapter 7.)

This classic quotation expresses the character not only of the old British rule in India, but also the inevitable character of any capitalist rule of a subject nation. But Adam Smith, who could only look through capitalist spectacles, was unable to see the wider process that was taking place and the inevitable results of that process.

The second stage of British rule in India opened only with the latter end of the eighteenth century and continued right through the nineteenth century up to the War.

In this stage, which was the inevitable consequence of the first, the wealth of plunder accumulated in England became (along with other and similar accumulations) the basis of the primary accumulation of capital for the development of capitalist manufacturing enterprise in England. It was on this basis that there took place the tremendous expansion of machine manufacture in England from the latter part of the eighteenth century, and the flooding of the world with cheap machine manufactured goods, first textiles and, later, metal and other goods.

This new expansion transformed the character of the British relation to India. Previously, India had been the source of the most highly valued textile and other manufactured goods, and heavy protective duties had been placed upon them in England in order to prevent the destruction of the young English industries. Now, on the other hand, the expansion of English machine manufacture overwhelmed and destroyed the more primitive Indian manufacture, and India became the great market, and a great source of raw materials, for British capitalism—at the expense of Indian economic development.

This change necessitated a change in the form of government. The interest in the exploitation of India was now extended to the whole of British capitalism; and only the executive organ of British capitalism as a whole could take charge. The government of India was transferred from the rule

of the East India Company to the direct administration of the British Government. This transference only took place when the influx of manufactured goods had reached such large proportions, and the consequent breakdown of the old feudal and village system had gone so far, as to compel the complete taking over of administration by the central organ of British capitalism. Capitalism had to suppress the old anarchic plundering, and take in hand the most elementary forms of administration in order to establish successfully a more systematic exploitation.

Thus the transference to the rule of the British Government was not a break of the mercantile tradition, but only the full emergence into the stage of large-scale capitalism, unifying the whole country politically and socially by a centralised administration and a network of railways and communications, and covering the whole country in every corner with large-scale manufactured goods. In consequence, the development of a more efficient bureaucratic system, the suppression of much petty corruption, and the beginnings of social administration were only the characteristic forms of more advanced capitalism, that is of more intensive exploitation, and were accompanied by the actual worsening of the condition of the people.

But this stage, which reached its full development by the outbreak of the War, inevitably gave rise to the conditions of the next.

The third stage is the stage when capitalism, having completely developed manufacturing industry at home, proceeds to the expansion of manufacturing industry in the subject country itself, to the export of capital and the industrialisation of

India. This is the culminating stage of imperialism. The Indian masses are now to become the instruments of cheap labour for the profits of the British bourgeoisie. But this necessitates the taking into partnership of the Indian bourgeoisie, for the exploitation of the Indian workers. So the political expression of the new stage is Dyarchy.

Imperialism has created the conditions for its downfall. The economic conditions for Indian independence are at hand, and the movement for Indian independence necessarily follows.

Thus the old policy of British rule in India was the expression of the second stage—the stage of India as a market and an agricultural colony. What we are witnessing to-day is the transference of India from the second to the third stage.

2. Karl Marx and the British Social Revolution in India

The British conquest of India has been in effect a form of Social Revolution. The understanding of this social revolution is the key to Indian politics.

Karl Marx, the father of modern Scientific Socialism, has analysed this process very clearly, not only in its general character, but also in its direct relation to India. Marx is commonly thought only to have dealt with European questions; and indeed it is often said that Marxism, as a European product, cannot have relation to Asiatic countries. This is a very great error, as the modern history of Russia and China is already showing. Marxism, as the highest point of the scientific outlook, deals throughout with the world process of development. And in point of fact

Marx gave special attention to the Indian question; and as far back as 1853 formulated an analysis and a series of predictions on the Indian situation which have since reached amazing verification.

Marx's analysis of the Indian question is to be found in a series of articles published in the "New York Daily Tribune" in 1853 under the titles of "British Rule in India," "History of the British East India Company in India" and "Future Effects of British Rule in India."*

In these articles, Marx analysed the role of the British conquest as effecting in fact a social revolution—the first social revolution in the Asiatic economic order. Like every social revolution, the immediate effects were destructive; the future effects were still to appear. "England has torn down the whole scaffolding of Indian social order without so far any signs of a rebirth being visible."

This social revolution consisted in the destruction of the old feudal order and village system, under the onset of bourgeois exploitation.

The feudal order in India, as in Europe, consisted in the rule of the great landed princes and their lieutenants, on the basis of the tribute from the peasantry, whom they nominally protected and whose social services (irrigation) were their care. This system was already shaking and tottering from the natural course of social development and its own internecine struggles (as in Europe) before its external overthrow by the British attack. By

* Reprinted, together with an introduction, by Professor Ryasanov, in the journal, "Unter dem Banner des Marxismus," 1925, No. 2 The republication of these articles by Professor Ryasanov, together with his introduction, constitutes an invaluable service to Indian political study. (English translation of first and third articles in the "Labour Monthly," Dec. 1925).

the British conquest the rule of the feudal lords was replaced, either directly or indirectly, by British rule, those that remained remaining only as parasites. On the other hand, land tenure passed, in the first stage, into the hands of the new landlord class of Zemindars, set up by the British as their agents in conscious imitation of the English landed system; and in the later stages of conquest the peasants' land was held direct from the British Government.

The village system, which was the substratum of the feudal order, was based on the union of petty agriculture and hand-industry in small self-sufficient local groups. But the invasion of foreign manufactured goods systematically destroyed the basis of hand industry, and consequently destroyed the whole basis of the village system. The displaced handicraftsmen were driven into agriculture; and from this point grew continuously the overcrowding and poverty of the villages.

Thus the destructive side of the bourgeois revolution was effectively carried out; but the constructive side was lacking, because the revolution was carried out by a foreign agent and therefore only as a factor in a foreign industrial growth. Hence the destruction without the "rebirth." The other side was necessarily to follow.

Does Marx shed tears over the fall of the village system? Marx saw the infinite suffering caused by the bourgeois social revolution (as in every country), and particularly on account of its being carried through under such conditions. But he recognises that the process was inevitable, and that the village system can no longer be reconstructed in the face of the forces of economic development.

And he points out that the village system was in fact the inevitable basis of despotism, slavery, superstition and cruelty.

"However painful it may be to human feeling to see how these countless, industrious, patriarchal and peaceful social communities have been disorganised, broken up into their component parts, thrown into an abyss of misery, and their individual members robbed at one and the same time of their old civilisation and of their inherited means of existence, we must nevertheless not forget that these idyllic village communities have for all time formed the firm foundation of oriental despotism and tied down the human spirit to the narrowest conceivable horizon, made it the helpless tool of superstition and the slave of tradition and habit, and robbed it of all greatness and all historic creative energy. We must not forget the barbaric egoism, which, clinging to a pitiful scrap of ground, could calmly look on at the ruin of whole kingdoms, the commission of unspeakable horrors, the slaughter of the population of whole towns, without being able to see in all this anything other than simply an event of Nature, but was itself condemned to impotence and therefore the prey of every assailant who chose to turn his attention that way. We must not forget that this worthless, immobile, vegetative form of being, this passive existence, called into being as reaction on the other side innumerable, wild, ungovernable forces of destruction, which even made murder a process of religion. We must not forget that these small communities were condemned to caste division and

slavery, that they degraded Man into the mere object of external conditions, instead of raising him to be the master of external forces, and that they transformed a social structure, produced simply by the process of its own development, into an unchangeable law of Nature, and so reached to that crude worship of Nature, which revealed its utter worthlessness in the fact that Man, the master of Nature, sank upon his knees in devotion before Hanuman, the Ape, and Saballa, the Cow."

At the same time Marx shows that the British social revolution in India, purely destructive though it still might appear, was inevitably creating the conditions for a new social order. He pointed out that although there was as yet no sign of a rebirth of India after the shattering of the old order, the British revolutionary role was inevitably creating the internal preconditions for a new social order in Asia, and particularly in India and China; and that the political unification of India and the establishment of a railway and telegraphic system inevitably opened the way to future industrial development and therefore eventually to the future independence of India.

"When you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country which possesses iron and coal, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion and out of which there must grow the application of machinery, and those

branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore become in India truly the forerunner of modern industry."

This was certainly an amazing prediction to have been made in 1853, and is only receiving its full verification now—in the twentieth century.

But Marx drew from this prognostication an additional conclusion which went even further. This was that the creation of a new order in India would inevitably lead to a movement of Indian independence; and that in this way the British bourgeoisie would ultimately dig the grave of its own rule in India. He pointed out that the new economic development of Indian industry would not in itself benefit the Indian masses any more than the previous stage, so long as British bourgeois rule remained; and, in words of burning import, he pointed to the necessity of overthrowing British bourgeois domination, to the future union of the workers of Britain with the Indian masses, as the destined path of Indian development and emancipation :—

"The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the present ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

Here Marx has taken a powerful glance into the future, which is still only in process of development. For the moment we must concern our-

selves with the immediate effects of the social revolution as it has so far developed.

3. The Overpressure on Agriculture

Marx's analysis lays bare the secret of Indian social conditions under British rule, and, above all, the secret of Indian poverty.

The secret lies in the subjection of India as an agricultural colony to British capitalism, and the consequent stifling of Indian economic development; the destruction of the old hand industries, without the possibility of replacement by machine industry, and the consequent overcrowding of the population into agriculture, the primitive conditions of which could not support them.

Between 1818 and 1837, Marx points out, British cotton exports to India increased 5200 times. In the same time the population of Dacca, the former manufacturing centre, decreased from 150,000 to 20,000. Here in this fragment of social history is vividly expressed the workings of British rule in India.

The overpressure on agriculture, which is at the base of the Indian economic problem is the direct result of British rule. It is commonly spoken as if the heavy predominance of agriculture in India were simply a peculiarity of the Indian people. On the contrary this disproportion has been created artificially by the conditions of British rule for the purposes of British capitalism. The Census statistics, from the time that they have dealt with the enumeration of occupations, have revealed this process, and have shown that even during the past generation the process has still been going on. Each successive Census, during the past 30 years,

has shown despite the growth of industry during the period an actual increase in the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture.

The figures are as follows :

Census.	*Proportion of population dependent on agriculture.*
1891	61%
1901	66%
1911	72%
1921	73%

Allowances must be made in these figures for variations in the methods of recording; but the broad fact of the increase is unquestioned.

Why has this increase in the dependence on agriculture taken place? The Census Commissioner for 1911 is perfectly clear in his answer :—

> " There seems to be no doubt that the number of persons who live by cultivation is increasing at a fairly rapid rate. The profits of various artisan classes have been diminished owing to the growing competition of machine-made goods, both locally manufactured and imported, with the result that these classes show a growing tendency to abandon their traditional occupations in favour of agriculture."
>
> (Census of India Report, 1911.)

Thus the overpressure in agriculture is the direct result of the expansion of European large-scale manufactured exports and the extension of their grip over the whole land. This is made clear by the accompanying sections of the same Census Reports dealing with the various trades and industries.

In textiles, for example, the 1911 Report records a decrease in the number of textile workers by 6 per cent. in the preceding ten years, despite the extension of textile manufacturing in India. This is attributed to "the almost complete extinction of cotton spinning by hand."

In the hide, skin and metal trades the 1911 Census records a decrease in the number of workers by 6 per cent., although at the same time the number of metal dealers increased six times. The reason is again clearly set out :—

> "The decrease in the number of metal workers and the concomitant increase in the number of metal dealers is due largely to the substitution for the indigenous brass and copper utensils of enamelled ware and aluminium articles imported from Europe."
>
> (Census of India Report, 1911.)

It is thus clear that the heavier and heavier overcrowding of agriculture is the direct working of British capitalist policy, which has required India as a market and a source of raw materials.

But this overcrowding of agriculture is at the root of Indian poverty. The continually intensified overpressure on primitive small agriculture, which is directly due to British capitalist workings in India,is the basic condition of the poverty of the Indian masses. This was recognised already by the Famine Commission of 1880, which reported :

> "At the root of much of the poverty of the people of India and of the risks to which they are exposed in seasons of scarcity, lies the unfortunate circumstance that agriculture forms

almost the sole occupation of the masses of the population."

The meaning of this overpressure on agriculture is shewn in such an investigation as that of Dr. H. H. Mann, Director of Agriculture in Bombay, who found that in a Poona village the average holding in 1771 was 40 acres; in 1818, 17½; in 1820/1840, 14; and 1915, 7 acres. He found that 81 per cent. of the holdings "could not under the most favourable circumstances maintain their owners." In Bengal the cultivated area works out at 2.2 acres per worker. "It is in such figures as these," writes the Bengal Census Report for 1921, "that the explanation of the poverty of the cultivator lies."

These facts are revolutionary facts. They point only in one direction, as similar facts in the agrarian history of Russia pointed.

4. The Discouragement of Industry

Parallel with the policy of driving the population increasingly on to agriculture, as a subsidiary of British industrial capitalism, went the policy of the direct discouragement of industry in India. The workings of the former were largely the unconscious result of economic forces. The workings of the latter policy were consciously and deliberately pursued, up to the outbreak of the War.

In the early days, as has been already mentioned, Protection was employed by Britain against the competition of Indian hand industry.

When, however, the tables were turned and the flood of British machine-made manufactures began to overwhelm India, the new doctrine of Free

Trade, which was the expression of British industrial monopoly, was rigidly imposed on India. Up to the war, all import duties on textile goods imported into India had to be counter-balanced by corresponding excise duties on such goods produced in India. These excise duties, constituting the most open expression of the subordination of Indian interests to British capitalism, were one of the principal battlefields of the pre-war Nationalist movement, representing the interests of the rising Indian bourgeoisie.

To this doctrine of Free Trade there was, however, an important exception. The import of machinery was saddled with the imposition of heavy import duties. It was essential to this stage of British manufacturing capitalism to prevent the development of machine manufacture in India. Up to the end of the nineteenth century the development of machine manufacture in India was effectively paralysed, and even thereafter only began very slowly.

The policy of officially discouraging the development of industry in India continued right up to the War and may be traced in many directions. Sir Valentine Chirol wrote in 1922 :

> " Our record in regard to Indian industrial development has not always been a very creditable one in the past and it was only under the pressure of war necessities that Government was driven to abandon its former attitude of aloofness if not jealousy towards purely Indian enterprise."
>
> ("Observer," 2 April, 1922.)

Even more revealing is an incidental statement in the official Report on "Moral and Material Progress of India" 1921:

> "Sometime prior to the War certain attempts to encourage Indian industries by means of pioneer factories and Government subsidies were effectively discouraged from Whitehall."
>
> ("Moral and Material Progress," 1921, page 144).

5. The Secret of Indian Poverty.

From the above analysis we see clearly revealed the secret of increasing Indian poverty under the century and a half of British rule—an increasing poverty which has defied the efforts of the most well-intentioned progressive bureaucrats.

Evidence of this increasing poverty and worsening of standards even up to the present day is to be found in a variety of sources, both official and unofficial (compare the results of Dr. Mann's enquiry, the most impartial and scientific enquiry of recent years, which is dealt with on page 1. "Even at present it would seem that the economic position of the village must be steadily deteriorating"), but most clearly in such incontrovertible facts as the progressive shortening of the expectation of life.

The fashionable bureaucratic explanation of this phenomenon of heavy and increasing poverty under British rule is "over-population," which is held to be the outcome of British peace and order.

This so-called explanation will not, however, bear examination.

The actual increase of population in India under British rule is very much less than the increase

in European countries during the same period. Here are the figures for the past half century (during the first half of the nineteenth century the relative British increase was of course, with the tremendous manufacturing expansion, immensely greater : but accurate comparative figures are not available) :

Increase of Population 1870-1910.

	Increase per cent.
India	18.9
England	58.0
Germany	59.0
Russia	73.9
Europe (average)	45.4

(*B. Narain, "Population of India."*)

Further, the density of population in India is very much less than that of the leading European countries :

Density of Population.

	Population per square mile.
India (1921)	177
England	650
Germany	332
France	184
Belgium	666
Japan	400

Finally, the actual rate of increase of population in India is less than that of every European country except France.

Thus, on every test, the conventional official explanation falls to the ground.

What makes the difference between the conditions of India and Europe is not any question of

population, but the fact that the economic development and expansion of production which have taken place in the European countries have not taken place in India and have, as we have seen from the above analysis, been artificially arrested by the workings and requirements of British capitalism.

The question of Indian population has been dealt with exhaustively by Professor Brij Narain in his recent book " The Population of India." In the course of this, after careful examination of the evidence, he not only demonstrates the facts of the relative movement of population in India and Europe mentioned above, but also shows that during the past 30 years the actual food producing area has increased more rapidly than the increase in population. This makes it all the more clear that there is here no question of population outstripping the natural limits of subsistence, but purely a question of the existing social order standing in the way of progress of the people.

But if the bureaucratic line of explanation is thus worthless, the old-fashioned Nationalist line of propaganda was inadequate to explain the real exploitation of India by the British, because it could not see the workings of capitalism.

The old Nationalist school of criticism has spoken of the burden of foreign tribute, the excessive cost of a highly paid bureaucracy, the home remittances, and the ruinous effects of the much discussed " drain."

But the bureaucratic machinery is only the machine of British capitalism : and its cost is only a fraction of the real total cost to the Indian masses of the domination of British capital. The total

cost of British capitalist domination can only be expressed in the total cost of all the workings of British capitalism, official and unofficial, public and private, trading, commercial, financial, or railways, and taking toll in the shape of profits, interest, salaries, commissions and a hundred other charges. In the same way the operation of the " drain " only exposes the adverse foreign balance without relation to the internal situation and class relations (a " drain " can exist with a progressive developing " new " country such as the United States before the war), and in consequence is not effective to show the real exploitation of the masses. The old Nationalist school, which could not see the workings of capitalism, failed to see the real exploitation of the Indian masses by British rule (an exploitation in which they themselves, as landlords, agents and usurers, were receiving a subordinate share in the proceeds).

The real basis then, of Indian poverty under British rule has lain in the capitalist subjection of India as an agricultural colony to the manufacturing capitalism of Britain.

This was the old system of imperialism in India up to the War. In appearances the British Government had established political unification, " peace," and " order," and had endeavoured to pose before the nations as the champion of " progress" in relation to the "backward" civilisation of India. The reality was a system of more and more intensified exploitation, of arrested economic development and of consequently increasing starvation and misery, and therefore of sharper and sharper repression—so that the best-intentioned

officials expressed themselves helpless and uncomprehending before the failure of their efforts and the seemingly irremediable misery of the masses, because they did not understand the workings of the capitalism whose agents they in fact were.

Chapter III.

MODERN IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

The change in imperialist policy since the War is the governing fact of the modern Indian situation.

What are the character and basis of this change?

What are its effects on the Indian National struggle?

1. The Modern Basis of Imperialism in India

The first and clearest expression of the new direction of imperialist policy came with the Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-18.

Up to the War, as has been shown in a previous section, British Government policy was directly hostile to the development of industry in India. This hostility was the reflection of the existing stage of British capitalist interests.

The Nationalists in the pre-War period, representing above all the interests of the newly-rising Indian bourgeoisie, fought for the demand of Industrial Development against Government opposition.

To-day Industrial Development is the keystone of British Government policy.

The Indian Industrial Commission (appointed in 1916), examined exhaustively into the possibilities, resources, technical conditions and necessities

of industrial development in India, and reported in 1918. This Report is the foundation of the modern policy. The Report recommended :—

(1) Government assistance for industrial development.

(2) Modernisation of agricultural methods.

(3) Universal primary education.

While the economic basis of the new policy was thus laid by the Industrial Commission, the political side was expressed through the Montague-Chelmsford Report of 1917. The Montague-Chelmsford Report has been generally considered in isolation as merely a political experiment in more or less illusory "self-government." But it was quite simply and openly the counterpart of the policy of the Industrial Commission.

The Montague-Chelmsford Report threw out the aim of winning the co-operation of the rising bourgeoisie in India by the offer of the Legislative Assemblies and a secondary share in administration; and at the same time advocated "a forward policy in industry."

> "We cannot measure the access of strength which an industrialised India will bring to the power of the Empire."

The subsequent years have seen the continuous development of this policy, most conspicuously in the increasing adoption of Protection in India. In this connection it is important to note the recommendations of the Fiscal Commission in 1922. The Fiscal Commission reported in favour of—

(1) Discriminating Protection, through a Tariff Board.

(2) Abolition of Counter-Excise Duties.
(3) Imperial Preference—where no economic loss to India.
(4) Free inflow of foreign capital.
(5) Rapid industrial advance.

(An Indian Minority Report, agreeing with the general conclusions, called for full Protection and no Imperial Preference.)

What is the basis of this new policy?

It is sometimes suggested that the basis lies simply in a gradual concession to Indian demands and Indian needs. But this is certainly not correct. The basis of the new policy does not lie wholly in Indian conditions.

It is true that the new stage represents an inevitable stage in Indian development to which the British Government was skilfully adapting itself. It is true also that the British Government, for political reasons, was endeavouring to win over the rising Indian bourgeoisie and so to disarm and divide the threatening Nationalist movement. But it would be as mistake to look solely on Indian conditions for an explanation of the new policy.

The new policy in India is only a part of the development of modern imperialism all over the world, a development to which every country today (outside the Soviet Union) is subject.

Imperialism is the most advanced and developed form of capitalism. Capitalism begins with the exploitation of the workers in the capitalists' own country. But expansion rapidly brings the need for new and wider markets and new sources of raw material. So come the first colonial wars of conquest. Later, capitalism reaches a point at which

the most intense industrial development has been reached in the home-country, to the stage of large-scale monopolist enterprise; and the further expansion of capitalist enterprise, rendered inevitable by the annual accumulation of profits, can only take place by overflowing to other countries and subjecting them also to industrial exploitation Railways, machinery and capital are exported to the new countries; industrial enterprises are established on the basis of the cheap and defenceless workers of the new country, over which political power is maintained by the imperialist state; and interest and profits are drawn to the shareholders of the imperialist country. This is the modern form of imperialism, the imperialism of finance capital (that is of the highly centralised trustified capital of the big modern Powers).

This modern imperialism is the key to world politics in the 20th century. The War is now generally recognised to have been a struggle of conflicting imperialisms for the territories of the world. As the result of the War, the subject territories of the defeated German imperialists were divided between the victorious British and French imperialists (who have also endeavoured to establish, through the Dawes Plan, a species of colonial subjection on the German workers). In this way, almost the whole of the world is parcelled out between the imperialist powers. The rivalry between the imperialist powers is very intense, and leads to sharper and sharper international discord and inevitable world war. At the same time, the subjection of whole peoples to imperialist exploitation leads to national struggles for independence and colonial wars. Finally the workers of the im-

perialist countries become increasingly oppressed by the competition of cheap foreign labour and by the burden of war, and grow ready to revolt against their conditions. Thus in imperialism we are witnessing the last stage of capitalism. Capitalism is inevitably driving to its own downfall, and at the same time the union of the workers and the subject peoples against imperialism leads the way to the future peaceful federation of peoples all over the world and eventually to the World Workers' Republic, free of all exploitation.

Britain, which was the first capitalist country, had for a long time reached this most advanced capitalist stage. More and more, during the past half-century, this process of the export of capital and exploitation of subject workers all over the world, with the resulting tribute of interest and profits, has taken first place in front of the old activities of manufacturing and trading. By the outbreak of the War it was estimated that Britain had four thousand million pounds invested abroad, or nearly one-third of the total national wealth and actually more than the total national wealth of India as estimated by Sir Robert Giffen in 1903.

Since the War, this process has developed even more rapidly, because the old industrial monopoly of Britain has been badly and permanently shaken. British industry, which yielded such fabulous profits to the British bourgeoisie in the 19th century is now declining before world competition; and the British bourgeoisie is looking more and more to the development of enterprise and investment overseas for their profit—in Africa, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia and Persia, in China, and not least in India.

In the post-War schemes of the British bourgeoisie the industrialisation of India holds a very important position.

The figures of the export of British capital to India are significant. They show :—

Year	*British Capital Exported to India £ millions*	*Total British Capital Exported £ millions*	*Percentage to India*
1919	1.4	237.	0.6%
1920	3.5	384.	0.9%
1921	29.5	215.	13.6%
1922	36.1	235.	15.3%
1923	25.3	203.	14.4%

India is to be " opened up " and developed by British capitalism employing Indian labour (with Indian capitalism as an agent and go-between) for the profit of the British ruling class.

2. The Industrialisation of India

An examination of current facts will show that the industrialisation of India has already gone a very long way—certainly more than the general trend of political discussion has yet taken into view.

The Government of India already in 1922 claimed for India a position as one of the leading industrial countries of the world. Lord Chelmsford, on behalf of the Indian Government, declared at the session of the Council of the League of Nations in October, 1922 :

> " It remains to justify India's specific claim to inclusion among the eight States of chief industrial importance. Her claim is based on broad general grounds and does not need elaborate

statistical methods to justify it. She has an industrial wage-earning population which may be estimated at roughly 20 millions and in addition a large wage-earning class employed in agricultural work."

This claim was accepted. India thus officially ranks as one of the eight leading industrial countries of the world. The political consequences of this position, *i.e.* the necessary emergence of the industrial proletariat to a leading role in the future of the country, are not yet fully realised.

The beginnings of this process of industralisation were already clearly visible in the decade before the War. But it was only in the conditions arising out of and after the War that the extremely rapid recent growth began. The lightning development of modern industry in India and other countries is one of the most important facts of the post-War world.

The clearest expression of this is seen in textiles. Of the average pre-War supply, 3000 million yards, or 70% came from England and 1200 million yards, or 28% from Indian production; of the post-War supply, 1000 million yards, or 35% came from England and 1700 million yards, or 61% from Indian production (Figures of Mr. Clare Lees, President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, "Manchester Guardian," 12/4/23).

With regard to mining, the value of mineral production rose, according to Sir A. Chatterjee, High Commissioner for India in London, from eight million pounds in 1908 to thirty million in 1920.

The comparison of companies and company capital is equally striking. An average new issue annually of twelve million pounds before the War gave place to a new issue of one hundred and eighty-three million pounds in 1918/19 and one hundred million pounds in 1919/20. These figures, of course, represented an artificially inflated boom, which was followed by many bankruptcies; but they reflect the feverish rate of growth, no less than the tremendous profits made of 100, 200 and even 300 per cent.

Does the future in India lie with large-scale industry? An examination of the facts will show that this is certainly the case.

The development of industry to large-scale organisation is seen in the statistics of businesses employing over 20 persons. Businesses employing over 20 persons numbered 7,113 in 1911 and 10,969 in 1921, an increase of 54 per cent. in ten years. Further, 94 per cent. of the workers employed in these were working in estabishments employing over 50 persons.

The same development to large-scale industry is witnessed in the rapid growth of the big new towns, at first ports and depots, but developing into manufacturing centres. In the thirty years 1891—1921 increase of "urban" population has been only 1 per cent. But the increase of population in the big towns numbering over 50,000 inhabitants during the ten years 1911—1921 alone has been 16 per cent.

Mr. B. Narain, who in the work already quoted makes reference to the above figures of large-scale industry, argues that the development of large-

scale industry is not inevitable in India, and that statistics show that the medium-sized industries are still more than holding their own. This fact is certainly true; and it would be out of all nature and reason for India to develop at a bound to fully concentrated monopolist industry. But the beginning of the process is already perceptible and it is proceeding at an amazingly rapid pace. Mr. Narain admits that the tendency towards large-scale production is inherent in the capitalist system and that concentration at a certain stage leads to monopoly. India is no more exempt from the laws of capitalism than any other country, and indeed seems likely to provide a very striking exemplification of them; since the extreme concentration of power in the State is leading to a very rapid trustification of industry and banking and a form of State capitalism completely dominating the small production beneath it.

But if the future of India lies with large-scale industry, then the political future equally certainly lies with the industrial proletariat. This is the lesson which still has to be learned.

The question of the industrialisation of India has raised much controversy in the Nationalist movement. In practice the majority of the leaders of Nationalism, and naturally all the leaders of the bourgeoisie have advocated and demanded the industrial development of India. On the other hand many opponents of British rule in India have also opposed the industrialisation of India, pointing to the hideous evils attendant on centemporary industrialisation in the towns of Western Europe and America, and already even more hideously manifested in the new industrial towns of India—the foul

and overcrowded houses and conditions of living, degradation, disease, long hours, labour of women and children, drink, unhealthy conditions of work and destruction of personal relationships.

But these evils are due, not to industrial development, but to capitalism, which condemns the workers to these conditions in order to hold them in subjection and build up fortunes for the few wealthy. When the workers learn to combine to produce for their own benefit, they can overcome these evils, and for united social production use the powers of industry to develop a healthy and happy society.

As with the question of the village system, so with the question of industrial development. The change is already taking place and is inevitable—what is necessary is not vainly to lament but to master the new forces.

On the other hand, the capitalist advocacy of industrial development, *i.e.*, of industrial development in order to build up profits and so-called "national" wealth, does not represent the interests of the Indian people. It is true that industrial development is essential to combat the poverty of the Indian people. But under capitalism industrial development does not go to benefit the masses of the people of India. It goes only to build up gigantic profits for shareholders in England and for a small rising wealthy class in India. The British industrial development of India is taking place with as definite a purpose as the previous opposition to industrial development.

The industrialisation of India is a necessary stage. But the present industrialisation of India is not taking place for India's benefit any more

than the previous relegation of India to the position of an agricultural colony. This is the new direction of Imperialist policy which is essential to be understood.

3. British Capital as the Predominant Partner

Capitalist enterprise in India is mainly British. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, in a famous sentence, in the course of a speech to the Society of Authors, spoke of "our duty to our Imperial position, to our kinsfolk in India and to the thousand millions of British capital invested in India."

The "Indian Year Book" for 1924, dealing with Indian industrial development, states :—

> "The great majority of the larger concerns are financed by European capital."

Roughly 85 per cent. of the capital of companies operating in India may be estimated as British. Sir M. Visvesvaraya, in his book "Reconstructing India," contrasts the figure of the capital of joint-stock companies registered in India, 60 millions, with the figure of the capital of joint-stock companies registered in England and operating in India, 411 millions—a contrast showing 87 per cent. for British capital. This estimate could only be an under-estimate; since, while a very small proportion of Indian capital may be allowed for as invested in English registered companies, it is certain that a serious proportion of British capital is invested in British companies registered in India, and this tendency is increasing.

Not only is British capital in India many times stronger than Indian capital, but statistics would

indicate that the predominance is actually increasing. The following table is instructive :—

COMPANIES OPERATING IN INDIA

Registered in India.

Year	Number	Paid-up capital
1912-13	2499	716 mill. rupees
1920-21	4283	1583 „ „

Registered Elsewhere.

Year	Number	Paid-up capital
1912-13	643	£495,000,000
1920-21	535	£192,000,000

This table would indicate, on the same basis of estimating, that whereas before the War the value of British capital was four times Indian, after the War it was six times Indian. Thus not only is British capitalism already the predominant force, but it is actually becoming more and more the predominant force. It is significant that in the period 1921-1924, when the new policy of direct investment of British capital in companies registered in India began to gather force, there is at once a relative increase in the capital of companies registered in India.

The conception of current capitalist development in India as a national development is a dangerous delusion. On the contrary, current capitalist development in India is in its most important aspects the key-stone of modern Imperialism in India, which is drawing Indian capitalism more and more into its train.

British capitalism is pursuing a conscious policy of penetration of Indian capital. The importance of this for the future of the national struggle needs no emphasis.

It is worth while to observe some of the steps by which this policy is taking place. The first of these steps is for British companies operating in India to change their nominal centre from London and enter on the Indian register—that is to assume an Indian "national" guise. The following statement from the "Financial News" is a frank statement of this policy :—

> "It is probable that in course of time, for political rather than financial reasons, a number of sterling companies now operating in India will find it in their interest to transfer to the Indian register and so establish an Indian domicile."
>
> ("Financial News," 8/2/23.)

A further step, and even more important, is to establish banking control. The concentration of banking control is the central instrument of power of finance capital. The amalgamation of the old Presidency banks into the single Imperial Bank of India, in 1921, was an essential step in the new policy. This concentration of the whole banking system means that every Indian bank and every Indian firm falls, immediately or indirectly, under the control of the British-directed Imperial Bank. Many episodes in recent Indian economic history have illustrated the process by which the power of manipulation of credit, currency and exchange has been used to secure the capitulation of Indian-owned enterprise.

The third step in this process of the Imperial domination of Indian capitalism is the direct absorption of and amalgamation with Indian-owned enterprise. The outstanding example of this has been the fate of the foremost Indian enterprise, the Tata

firm, which has become more and more closely interwoven with British capitalist interests. Their reported alliance with the British-owned "Bengal Iron and Steel Company" heralded the capitulation of Indian capitalist enterprise to Imperialism, which was paralleled on the political field.

The example of Tata's brings home vividly the meaning of the new policy. The Indian Legislative Assembly voted a heavy subsidy to the "Tata Iron and Steel Company." At the same time an import duty was voted against foreign steel. This help, given at the expense of the workers and peasants of India, was given nominally in the interests of national development. An amendment in favour of a minimum wage for the Indian workers received no support even from the Swarajist members. Yet to whom was the help actually given? It was given, in fact, as subsequent events have made clear, to the Imperialist interests in India which are the enemies of Indian freedom. Thus the effect of the new Imperialist policy, which skilfully plays on the identification of national interests with capitalist interests, is to lead the Nationalist capitalist representatives, not only into the alley of co-operation, but actually to play into the hands of direct Imperialist interests.

The culminating phase of the process is the political phase.

4. The Political Reflex of the New System—Dyarchy and Dominion Status

The political reflex of the new Imperialist policy is Dyarchy.

Dyarchy represents the combination of British and Indian capital which is now being attempted,

with Indian capital as the subordinate partner. The so-called "Constitutional Reforms" were not drafted as a concession to popular agitation. They were originally promulgated in 1917, before the general popular movement had begun to develop. Their scope was aimed to attract only a tiny handful at the top. In the political, as in the economic, sphere, the new Imperialist policy demanded the co-operation of the Indian bourgeoisie to act as their agents in the exploitation of the Indian masses.

The real meaning of Dyarchy is expressed, with brutal clearness, in the "Economist" :—

> "It is clear that considerable advantages will attend to enterprises joining Indian and British capital under one direction. The "Dyarchy" stage is as inevitable in the industrial evolution of this country as it has proved to be the halfway house on the road to full Dominion autonomy. That the sequel would be identical is not necessarily a sound inference. Probably more than half the capital invested in jute mills is now held by Indian investors. Nonetheless, the former (*i.e.*, exclusively British) control remains unqualified, investors being apparently content to let well alone."
>
> ("Economist," July 19th, 1924.)

What does this statement mean? It means that the whole development of India up to and including full Dominion status within the Empire, is calmly and cynically envisaged by the leading organ of British capitalism, and it is held that this will not make any difference to the real British Imperialist control in India, which is a capitalist control.

This British Imperialist conception of "Swaraj" is expressed even more precisely in another statement in the same journal :—

> "In essence the Swarajists' conception of responsible government is an India wholly independent of Parliamentary control, excluding British goods by high tariffs, but dependent on the British army and navy for defence against aggression. It might profit the National Council of the Independent Labour Party to ponder the full implications of the foregoing conception. The net result on the economic side would be precisely a further extension of that close alliance between British capital and Indian labour which is even now increasingly evident and which behind an Indian tariff wall would result in a measure of Indian growth as yet hardly conceived."
>
> ("Economist," March 22nd, 1924.)

Indian Nationalists will do well to consider the meaning of the above two quotations and their bearing on the Indian struggle for freedom.

5. The Task of Indian Emancipation

From the considerations in the above sections, certain very definite conclusions follow.

The identification of Indian national interests with the interests of Indian capitalism is false.

On the contrary, Imperialism is to-day absorbing Indian capitalism, and preparing an economic and political partnership, which will eventually take the form of Dominion status.

Therefore the struggle of the Indian people for freedom can only be for full independence. Dominion status is the expression of the Indian

capitalist aim of partnership with the British bourgeoisie. But this aim cannot express the interests of the masses. The interests of the masses demand complete freedom from Imperialist exploitation, and this can only be realised by complete independence.

In the second place the Indian bourgeoisie cannot be trusted to lead the struggle. At every turn they are to be expected to vacillate, to draw back, to go over to the camp of the Government at the critical point. Their interests are already heavily entangled with Imperialism, and this dependence is increasing. The Indian national struggle is the struggle of the widest masses, and the leadership of the national struggle must express their interests. The Indian national struggle will be carried to success by the strength of the working masses whose interests are completely divorced from Imperialism.

Finally, the economic transformation of India which is taking place is a necessary process. Industrial development is necessary to combat Indian poverty. The scientific organisation of agriculture is necessary. But this transformation and the new forces gained must be won into the hands of the Indian people if they are to benefit the Indian people. Therefore the struggle of the Indian people must be ultimately a struggle for social liberation.

Chapter IV.

THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

How far has the Nationalist Movement in India succeeded in meeting the new conditions set by modern Imperialism?

The early Nationalist Movement up to the War was confined to a relatively small stratum of the population—mainly the professional classes. The upper classes, the landowners, and wealthier elements favoured by the British, were loyal to the foreign ruler; the workers and peasants were not yet awakened.

Even before the War a widening of this circle was already visible. Agitation began to reach the lower elements of the middle class. The old Constitutional or Moderate Nationalism was dethroned in favour of extremism. Extremism voiced the more uncompromising hatred of the dispossessed intellectuals against Imperialist rule. But extremism was still weak in practical policy and was not able to build up any powerful or continuous mass movement. Its strongest weapon was the weapon of the boycott; but this weapon, taken alone, was no more than a reflex of the interests of the Indian manufacturers. It is significant that the most vigorous expression of extremism was the revolutionary movement of the Terrorists—a sure sign that the movement had not yet extended beyond

the limits of the middle class to the real power of the productive workers.

With the World War, and after the War, there came a great awakening of the masses. This awakening was not peculiar to India but was part of a world movement. The world revolutionary wave, which followed on the War, and the Russian Revolution, spread to every country in the world; the workers in Europe and the subject nations in Asia were carried forward, in a struggle for freedom which shook the foundations of Imperialism. The Nationalist Movement in India was lifted to a new plane; unrest was universal; millions took part in the great demonstrations, strikes, hartals and struggles, and between 1919 and 1922 the Empire in India was in danger.

From this moment on, the Indian national struggle has entered on a new phase. It has become, in fact, a mass movement and, in spite of every failure, it can never more return to the old levels. The hundreds of millions of peasants and workers, in whose name so long the middle class Nationalists have spoken, are stirring. The crucial question is: Where is the leadership that can voice their demands? In the answer to this question lies the future of the national struggle.

The period of 1919 to 1922 was the first period of testing by fire of the Nationalist Movement. From the experience of this period the lessons for the future must be drawn.

Has the correct leadership for the mass movement been found? Was the leadership offered in 1919-1922 correct? Does the present line of policy and

organisation meet the needs of to-day? These are questions that must be answered.

The Empire in India has inflicted a heavy defeat upon the Nationalist Movement, as is witnessed in the present years of reaction. The lessons of this defeat must be analysed and mastered in order to prepare for future victory. In the period of depression the tasks of preparation, of revision of programmes and of organisation, are all-important.

1. The Role of Gandhi

Any consideration of the modern experience of the Nationalist Movement must begin with a consideration of the crisis period of 1919-1922. This is the turning point of the modern movement.

The discussion of this period is fraught with difficulties. The personality of Gandhi has woven its way into the hearts of millions; and personal loyalties, philosophical and religious predilections and political traditions all cut across a clear discussion of the issues.

For the present purpose, however, the personality and philosophy of Gandhi is not the important question, save indirectly. What is important is the mass movement of 1919-1922, and the leadership that was offered to it. The personality and philosophy of Gandhi are important only so far as they express and throw light on the social forces of leadership that were available. The only question of direct significance is: Was the political line of leadership correct? Is the subsequent falling away that has taken place inevitable, or is it the outcome of wrong leadership? If mistakes were made, what precisely were those mistakes? What are the lessons for the future?

From this point of view we may endeavour to review the episode of 1919-1922 and the role of Gandhi.

It is necessary first of all to recognise clearly the central significance of this period, and the achievement of Gandhi. The central significance of this period consisted in the fact that the national movement became a mass movement. The achievement of Gandhi consisted in that he, almost alone of all the leaders, sensed this and reached out to the masses. This was the first great achievement of Gandhi. He did—at one point—reach the masses.

This positive achievement of Gandhi is bigger than all the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses which may be brought against him, and constitutes his real contribution to Indian Nationalism. For the first time within the ranks of Nationalist politicians, he pushed beyond the narrow circle of Congress, Council, Assembly and bureaucratic politics, and endeavoured to bring his message to the millions of peasants and other workers. In them, in the moment of his power, he found his strength; from the moment that he became divorced from them his decline began.

The second great achievement of Gandhi consisted in this, that he brought before the masses a policy of action, of action of the masses.

What was the policy which he brought forward, and which was able to arouse a response from the awakening masses? The policy that he brought forward was the policy of Non-Co-operation to win Swaraj, and, in particular, at the height of his agitation the policy of Mass Civil Disobedience.

At this point it is worth while to pause a moment to consider the meaning of Non-Co-operation and Mass Civil Disobedience.

Non-Co-operation is commonly presented as the expression of a certain philosophy, the philosophy of "non-violence" or opposition to all force and attempt to use only spiritual weapons of persuasion instead of methods of coercion.

This is certainly not correct.

The whole practical meaning, and the whole political importance, of Non-Co-operation is in complete contrast to this. Non-Co-operation derives its political importance precisely because it is the opposite of this.

Non-Co-operation is the attempt to *force* the Government to submit, by the use of the power of the united action of the masses. There is no question of a gentle, persuasive, spiritual argument. It is a question of *power.*

This point is so important that it is essential to establish it with absolute clearness. To remove any doubt upon it, it is only necessary to review Gandhi's own language *during the agitation,* which was warlike in the extreme. Gandhi said :—

> "The Non-Co-operators are at war with the Government. We want to overthrow the Government and compel its submission to the people's will. We shall have to stagger humanity, even as South Africa and Ireland, with this exception—we will rather spill our own blood, not that of our opponents. This is a fight to a finish."

This was from his manifesto of December, 1921.

"I am a man of peace, but not of peace at any price—only of that peace which will enable us to stand up to the world as free men."

"Overthrow the Government." "Compel its submission." This is not the language of spiritual persuasion. It is the language of coercion. It is powerful language of the widest mass appeal : and it derives its power precisely because it is based squarely on the strength of the action of the masses.

The propaganda of Non-Co-operation and Mass Civil Disobedience brought an entirely new character into the Nationalist Movement which had never before been present save for the limited boycott experiments of the extremists before the War. For the first time it was attempted to call into play the immediate action of the masses of the people in order to force the Government to surrender. This was the fact which gave revolutionary meaning to the propaganda of Non-Co-operation in 1920 to 1922.

These were the two great achievements of Gandhi. It is now necessary to turn to the collapse that followed, and to discover the reasons of this collapse.

The militant language of Gandhi suited the temper of the masses. A tremendous response was evoked. Millions were ready to do his bidding. The order for the hartal to meet the Prince of Wales's visit was answered with overwhelming support from all over the country and mass strikes. The Ahmedabad Congress of 1921 voted Gandhi dictatorial powers to carry out the programme of Mass Civil Disobedience.

And then followed the sudden rout of February, 1922. The rout was not a defeat of the popular forces by the superior strength of the Government. It was a retreat without a battle. The great gun of Mass Civil Disobedience, which had been so often threatened, was never fired. The signal of retreat was followed by the collapse of the whole movement, by the arrest of Gandhi without a sign of mass protest, by the complete recovery of the British Government, and by the universal reaction and depression which has continued up to the present day.

What was the meaning of the rout, the greatest disaster in the history of the Nationalist Movement?

The overt reason was plain and straightforward.

Two incidents occurred—at Chauri Chaura and at Bareilly—which revealed the rising temper of the masses. They were two outstanding episodes of conflicts with the authorities on the part of poor peasants and town workers, such as were taking place all over the country. Such episodes have been, in every country and in every great struggle, the symptoms of a mass movement rising to assert itself against an over-ruling power which uses every form of violence and coercion.

Immediately, on the news of these episodes, that is on the first real signs of the mass activity which they themselves were calling into being, Gandhi and the Congress leadership called off the whole movement. By so doing they showed that they were afraid of the mass activity with which they had been playing.

Why were they afraid of the mass activity, which

was already showing itself the most powerful instrument to overthrow the hated foreign Government? The answer is made plain in the resolution which was carried by the Congress Committee at Bardoli to call off the Movement. This resolution deserves the most careful study.

It runs as follows :—

"Clause 1.—The working committee deplores the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura in having brutally murdered constables and wantonly burned police thana (stations).

"Clause 2.—In view of the violent outbreaks every time mass civil disobedience is inaugurated, indicating that the country is not non-violent enough, the working committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience . . . be suspended, and *instructs the local Congress Committee to advise the cultivators to pay land revenue and other taxes due to the Government,* and to suspend every other activity of an offensive character.

"Clause 3. The suspension of mass civil disobedience shall be continued until the atmosphere is so non-violent as to insure the non-repetition of atrocities such as at Gorakhpur or of hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras on the 17th of November and the 13th of January.

"Clause 4.—All volunteer processions and public meetings for the defiance of authority should be stopped.

"Clause 5.—*The working committee advises Congress workers and organisations to inform the ryots [peasants] that withholding of rent payment to the Zemindars [landlords] is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country.*

"Clause 6.—*The working committee assures the Zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances the committee desires that redress be sought by mutual consultation and arbitration.*"

This resolution shows that it was not an abstract question of non-violence which actuated the movers. It will be noted that no less than three clauses of the resolution (italicised) deal specifically, emphatically, and even urgently, with the necessity of the payment of rent by the peasants to the landlords. There is here no question of violence or non-violence. There is simply a question of class interests, of exploiters and exploited. The non-payment of rent could not be suggested by anyone to be a "violent" action : on the contrary, it is a most peaceful (though also most revolutionary) form of protest. Why then should a resolution, nominally condemning "violence" concentrate so emphatically on this question of the non-payment of rent and the "legal rights" of the landlords? There is only one answer possible. The phraseology of "non-violence" is only in reality a cover, conscious or unconscious, for class interests and the maintenance of class relations of power.

The Congress leadership called off the Move-

ment because they were afraid of the awakening mass activity; and they were afraid of the mass activity because it was beginning to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were closely associated.

By the Bardoli Resolution the Congress leadership clearly took their stand with the landlords and the British Government against the peasants and the masses of the workers. This was the decisive breaking of the national front.

Not the question of "violence" or "non-violence," but the question of class interest in opposition to the class movement, was the breaking point of the Nationalist Movement in 1922.

From that moment the back of the movement was broken. The Government had a free path. The Congress slipped back from its momentary position as leader of a mass movement to its old position as a debating assembly of middle-class representatives. The arrest of Gandhi,* which the Government would never have dared six months before, produced no stir. Tens of thousands of Nationalist fighters were left to rot in gaol, without bringing any response of a movement outside or fruit for their sacrifice. By August the British Prime Minister was able to make his "steel-frame"

* The Bardoli decision, postponing Mass Civil Disobedience indefinitely, was reached at the Congress Committee of February 11th. On March 1st Gandhi was arrested, and was subsequently sentenced to six years' imprisonment. He was released, however, in less than two years on grounds of health, by which time the collapse of the old Nationalist Movement was complete. He subsequently played little part in politics, although he presided over the National Congress at Belgaum in 1925, and there advocated 'honourable co-operation' with the Empire. In 1926 he formally resigned leadership of Indian Nationalism.

speech of open defiance to all the aspirations of Indian Nationalism.†

It is important to concentrate attention on the decisive resolution of Bardoli, because this is the turning point of the Nationalist Movement, and in it are expressed the whole issues before the Indian people.

These issue are not, as is still often confusedly made out, abstract and metaphysical issues of violence and non-violence. They are, as the Bardoli resolution makes perfectly clear, plain and natural issues of class interests. There is and can be no issue of violence and non-violence in the abstract. Violence is used on both sides; and the real weight of violence and coercion lies heavily in the scale of the exploiters and the Government. But the real issue is on which side the stand is taken—with the exploiters or with the exploited. Gandhi and the Congress leadership chose to sacrifice the interests of the national struggle to the interests of the tiny exploiting minority (who are the users of every weapon of violence and coercion) to abandon and call off the national struggle as soon as these sectional class interests were threatened, and so to play directly into the hands

† The so-called "steel frame" speech was delivered by Lloyd George in the House of Commons on August 2nd, 1922. In this speech he proclaimed the policy of the permanent subjection of India to British rule in the following terms :—

" ' That Britain under no circumstances will relinquish her responsibility in India is a cardinal principle, not merely of the present Government, but of any Government which will command the confidence of the people in this country. . .

" 'I can see no period when India can dispense with the guidance and the assistance of this small nucleus of the British Civil Service. . . . They are the steel frame of the whole structure.' "

of the British Government against the exploited mass of their fellow countrymen.

What was the result? The national struggle against the British Government was thrown into the background. The Congress lost its line of contact with the masses, and so lost its power. The British Government triumphed.

This, and not the metaphysical confusion about non-violence (which would have soon enough worked itself out in the daily experience of the mass movement) is the real charge against Gandhi. Gandhi failed as a leader of the national struggle because he could not cut himself loose from the upper-class interests and prejudices in which he had been brought up. He could only regard the workers as instruments of labour to be kept in their place. On a famous occasion he declared: "It is dangerous to make use of the factory proletariat." On another occasion he declared: "All are born to serve God's creation, the Brahmin, with his knowledge, the Kshatriya, with his power of protection, the Vaishya, with his commercial ability, the Shudra, with his bodily labour."

The "spirituality" of Gandhi is only the expression of this class interest. All parasitic and propertied classes have to weave around themselves a fog of confused language, superstition, traditions, religion, reverence, etc., in order to hide from the masses the fact of their exploitation. The spiritually reactionary propaganda of Gandhi need not further concern us here, save to note the practical bourgeois policy in every actual question that lies behind it.

From this class alignment inevitably follows his co-operation with the Imperialist Government.

This co-operation notoriously preceded his Nationalist leadership, both before the War (his organisation of an ambulance corps a thousand strong for service in the Boer War, and his similar assistance in the crushing of the Zulu Rebellion of 1906) and also in his War record ("As late as 1918 he took part in a Conference at Simla to devise measures for India to redouble her War effort," "Times," March 11th, 1922.) It has come to the forefront again in his most recent utterances. But indeed it continued, in fact, right through the period of so-called Non-Co-operation whenever the situation looked dangerous for propertied interests (for instance during the mill strike in his own town at Ahmedabad). The presidential speech at the Belgaum Congress, with its appeal to India to remain within the British Empire, is only a recent example of this inevitable surrender.

The Congress leadership of Gandhi was not the direct leadership of the big bourgeoisie. The big bourgeoisie, represented by the Moderates and Liberals, remained outside the whole campaign of Non-Co-operation because they knew the danger of playing with the masses. But it was a leadership of petty bourgeois intellectual elements, who wished on the one hand to stand forward as leaders of the masses, but who feared to break with the propertied interests of the bourgeoisie. Therefore they broke down in the moment of crisis, and thereafter showed themselves impotent and bankrupt. Increasingly, despite their own wishes and original professions, they have been dragged into the camp of bourgeois liberal policy and co-operation with the Imperial Government—as witnessed in the final surrender of Gandhi to Das's policy of co-operation.

This failure is full of lessons for the future. The breakdown of 1922, and its ignominious sequel, was not a breakdown of the revolutionary will and energy of the masses, but of the leadership. The interests of the peasants and the workers were not voiced. The existing petty bourgeois leadership clung to the outlook and interests, as well as to the material support, of the landholders and merchants, and therefore would not uphold the national struggle. As soon as they were faced with the activity of the masses, they sank into co-operation with the Government. This fact shows that the only leadership which can carry through the national struggle successfully is a leadership which firmly and unswervingly expresses the interests of the peasants and workers.

2. The Role of the Swaraj Party

The second episode of Indian Nationalism has been the episode of the Swaraj Party.

The Swaraj Party inherited the debacle of Gandhism. Gandhism, it was clear, had come to a standstill, and it was necessary to find some sequel. It was possible to develop in two directions. One was to come closer to the peasants and workers, to voice their demands, to organise them, and so to build up a powerful movement. The other was to relapse into the position of an open bourgeois party, endeavouring to bargain with the Government for advantageous terms of alliance. These two directions were completely conflicting; although the conflict, first fully revealed in the episode of Gandhi, was only beginning to be realised. An examination of the start of the Swaraj Party will show that at its inception both elements were represented in the

expressions and outlook of the new leader at that time, C. R. Das. It was only under the pressure of events that the stronger element, the bourgeois element, was forced to stand out clearly.

What was the advance on Gandhism that the Swaraj Party held out to the Nationalist Movement as the basis of its claim to leadership? The advance was two-fold.

First, the Swaraj Party proclaimed the necessity of building the national movement upon the masses, of organising the peasants and the workers, and of expressing their aims in its programme. In his speeches at the outset of the Swaraj Party, Das declared his desire to win Swaraj for the 98 per cent. and not for the 2 per cent., his opposition to the bourgeoisie and his refusal to accept the aim of substituting a "white" bureaucracy by a "brown" bureaucracy. He preached the necessity of organising the peasants. He, and other Swarajist followers, took a leading part in the organisation of the Trades Union Congress. In all these respects, the Swaraj Party, both by its proclamations and by the very character of its new organisation, revealed that the lesson of the Gandhi episode had begun to make itself felt and, understood or not, the new task of organising the masses for struggle was definitely presenting itself to any future aspirant to leadership of the Nationalist Movement.

Second, the Swaraj Party broke with the Passivism of Gandhi. At the Delhi Special Congress of 1923, which witnessed the triumph of the Swarajists, Motilal Nehru declared his direct opposition to Gandhi's doctrine of passive resistance. The Swaraj Party stood forward as a Party claiming to stand for a policy of action.

"The organisation of the masses." "A policy of action." So far so good. But for what purpose were the masses to be organised? What was to be the line of positive action? These were the questions that brought the Swaraj Party face to face with real issues.

In answer to this, the Swaraj Party propounded the policy of Revolutionary Parliamentarism. They proposed to enter the Legislative Councils in order to wreck them, declaring, in the words of their first programme, for "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the Councils, with a view to making government through the Councils impossible."

The policy of Revolutionary Parliamentarism, however, can only be based on one indispensable condition: namely, that it is representing an active and militant mass movement outside. Failing this, the Revolutonary Parliamentarism, whatever the initial thunder, will inevitably disappear into the channels of ordinary "practical" parliamentarism. The question is thus brought back to its original point, namely the programme of the mass movement. A genuine mass movement would necessitate a break with the bourgeois basis.

But was the Swaraj Party prepared to make this break, and take up in actual practice the interests and demands of the masses? A survey of its record will show that the Swaraj Party was in actual policy heavily tied to the interests of the bourgeoisie. It was a significant fact that the first clause of the first draft for a constitution of the new party laid down the sanctity of private property and the right of the "growth of individual wealth." Subsequent experience showed that the Swaraj Party was eager

to take up the protection and advocacy of Indian commercial and industrial interests, and this eagerness even overcame the original professions of parliamentary abstentionism; but with regard to the workers (as the question of the Tata subsidy revealed) a deafer ear was shown.*

From this social basis the succeeding sequel, right up to the point of "honourable co-operation," is only a logical outcome. The successive stages of sliding down the steps of Parliamentary capitulation, during the next year and a half, form an ugly but commonplace picture. The protection of bourgeois interests in Parliamentary Committees and lobbies (in direct violation of the original pledge to abstain from participation in committees or the promotion of bills) overrode all wider considerations of the national struggle. The Swaraj Party in the Legislative Assembly revealed itself to the masses as a party representing the special interests of the bourgeoisie, rather than as a party of revolutionary national struggle, more and more losing all basis of difference from the Liberals (*i.e.*, contact with the masses) and therefore inevitably drifting into co-operation.

* On January 26th 1925, the Legislative Assembly unanimously agreed to a bounty of twenty rupees (26s. 8d.) per ton on all steel manufactured in India. This was additional to the protective duty already imposed. This was a direct gift of public money, extracted mainly from the taxation of the poverty stricken peasants, to the wealthy Tata Iron and Steel Company (Indian owned, but with strong British influence), which, with the Bengal Iron and Steel Company (British owned) was to form the Indian Steel Combine. Amendments proposed by N. M. Joshi, the Trade Union leader, to establish a guarantee of certain minimum labour conditions as a condition of the grant, received no support from the Swaraj Party, which wholeheartedly joined with the Government in voting the bounty.

By April 1925, Das issued the manifesto declaring the conditions on which the Party would abandon parliamentary obstruction and accept office. The comedy was played out.

The Swaraj leaders who had begun with the language of a revolutionary movement and claiming to be the leaders of the masses, ended as the direct apostles of upper class interests against the national cause and the defenders of the Government against the masses. The bourgeois forces, which had always been the dominating power behind the Swaraj Party, had overcome the weak and uncertain popular elements.

In the later stages some of the Swarajist leaders even appear as direct traitors to the national cause appealing to the Government for recognition of their services as standing between the Government and revolution. Their statements are again and again open statements of treachery to the national cause. These statements are so serious, and so completely reveal the Swarajist leaders' conception of themselves as agents of the Government, that they need to be placed on record. On August 31st, 1924, C. R. Das wrote in his organ, "Forward" :—

> "There is a more serious anarchist movement than the authorities realise. It is growing, and it is increasingly difficult to suppress it. I hope the British and Indians will get together and presently come to terms on the lines I have mentioned. If the Swarajist Movement fails, no repression can possibly cope with the anarchy which is sure to raise its head."

In June, 1925, after the death of Das, T. C. Goswami, Chief Whip of the Swaraj Party, declared :—

> "Mr. Das was never a revolutionary. In his death, both India and Great Britain have lost a true defender of real law and order. Mr. Das stood between India and revolution."
>
> ("Daily Herald," 18/6/25.)

"Mr. Das stood between India and revolution." That epitaph, from his own follower, deserves to stand, for a leader who, at one point in his career, came near to seeing the path forward and carrying the national movement on to a new stage, but who in the end shrank back from the task and, in consequence, sank to the lowest levels of capitulation and surrender to Imperialism.

But the leadership of Das and those who have succeeded him does not represent the whole of the Swaraj Party. The Swaraj Party has from the outset contained many diverse elements and tendencies. Alongside of the elements of bourgeois capitulation there exist younger and more active elements which are more ready to come closer to the workers and peasants, and can in the future play a valuable part in the national struggle.

Those elements in the Swarajist camp that wish to carry the national struggle forward have now to face the issue : What is to be the next stage? The leadership of Gandhi has ended in surrender. What force can carry the national struggle forward?

There can be only one answer to this question. The interests of the wealthy minority, because they are antagonistic to the interests of the mass of the

population, inevitably reveal themselves, in the final issue, as allied with the interests of the foreign Government. The national struggle will have to be the struggle of the masses of the peasants and workers, carried forward in spite of the treachery of the landowning and wealthy elements.

But this brings into play a host of new considerations, which govern the stage that must succeed to the experiences of Gandhi and the Swaraj Party.

3. The Congress and the Masses

From the foregoing, it is clear that the central question of the Nationalist Movement is its relation to the masses.

The Congress, so far, is and has been the only approach to a mass organisation throughout the Indian people. But the Congress itself has gone through very great fluctuations. Before the War, the Congress numbered a handful of thousands. In the height of the Non-Co-operation agitation it leapt up to a tremendous expansion and appeal, extending its organisation all over the country and reaching the nominal membership of ten millions. Since then, there has been an overwhelming collapse, bringing the membership down to less than a hundredth part of what it was.

What is the meaning of this collapse, which could hardly be paralleled in the history of any other organisation in any country? It is clear that the Congress gained at one point a tremendous hold upon the masses, and then completely lost this hold. Even more clearly than the total political situation this collapse testifies to the scale of the failure of Bardoli and the subsequent years.

Indeed the consideration of these figures, in 1924, prompted Gandhi to a very interesting reflection. He declared, in the course of speaking of his "unconditional surrender" to the Das policy, and of the failure of the Congress numbers :

"We politicians do not represent the masses except in opposition to the Government."

If for the rather meaningless word "politicians" is substituted "the middle classes," this sentence contains an extremely important statement. The middle class can lead and represent the masses only in so far as it is leading and conducting a direct national struggle against the Imperialist Government. The moment that the middle class, through fear for its own sectional class interests, betrays the national struggle and enters into co-operation with the Government, from that moment the middle class ceases to be able to represent the masses and shrinks at once into political impotence, as pygmies, pitifully endeavouring to bargain with the Government as the sole barriers between the Government and the masses. From this it is clear that the real national struggle is, and can only be, the struggle of the masses, and that the role of those middle-class and intelligentsia elements who wish to serve the national struggle is, and must be, as the organisers and agitators, that is the servants, of the mass movement.

This conclusion is so clearly borne out by the whole political situation and recent history of India that the recognition (though not the acceptance) of it, as the only way forward, can be seen breaking its way through even in the circles of moderate bourgeois Nationalism.

An example of this is to be seen in the questionnaire instituted in 1925 by the "Bombay Chronicle" among representative Nationalists, on the subject of the next steps to be taken. On the question of the possibility of non-constitutional methods, such as non-payment of taxes, the answers were, in general, guarded; but the general tendency was to recognise, at any rate in theory, the necessity of such steps if the movement could be strong enough to carry them out. One leading capitalist, Sir Dinshaw Petit, however, made a very plain and emphatic statement in an opposite direction: "Non-payment of taxes," he said, "would only do for those who have no vested interest in the country."

The National Movement is indebted to this capitalist worthy for the clearness of his statement. It does, indeed, put the issue in a nut-shell. If the National Movement is to go forward it is admitted that only the action of the masses can have any influence on the Government. But the interests of the bourgeoisie are suspicious of and hostile to the action of the masses. Therefore, of two things, one: either the bourgeoisie, in fear for their class interests, will abandon the national struggle: or, if the bourgeoisie endeavour to persecute the national struggle, they will have to recognise that the national struggle can only be carried on by the masses and that for their own interest they will have to assist the agitation and organisation of the masses. In either case the effect is the same: the Indian National Movement can only develop as a mass movement, and more and more clearly on the basis of the interests of the masses.

But a movement of the masses demands two things: first organisation of the masses, and, second, a programme of direct appeal. The Indian Nationalist Movement still lacks either. The organisation of the Congress is sketchy, lives chiefly in the Committees, and is not closely linked with the masses or their needs. The programme is even weaker. Swaraj is treated as an "indefinable" mystery. This was the answer given by Das, in his Gaya Presidential Address:

> "A question has often been asked as to what is Swaraj. Swaraj is indefinable, and is not to be confused with any particular system of government. Swaraj is the natural expression of the national mind, and must necessarily cover the whole life history of the nation."

This kind of thing wil not go far with peasants and workers who are starving for the means of existence. Nor will a practical programme that offers them, for their desperate needs, an expensive fashionable hobby of a spinning-wheel. A revived National Movement will have to take up very much more seriously the question of the peasants and the workers, their organisation and their needs.

Chapter V.

THE PEASANTS, THE WORKERS AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that the question of the peasants and the workers is the vital question for Indian Nationalism.

It is therefore necessary to review the position of the Nationalist Movement in relation to the peasant question, and to the demands of the workers.

1. The Peasant Question and the Nationalist Movement

The peasant question is the dominating question for any mass movement in India. The relation of the Nationalist Movement to this question is therefore of decisive importance for its future role.

What is the line of propaganda that the Nationalist Movement has so far taken up in relation to the peasants? The propaganda while varying in character has in the main concentrated on two issues :

1. *Village Reconstruction* or "Back to the Village" : the restoration of the old self-sufficing village unit.

2. *The Charka.*

It is necessary to ask seriously whether these lines of propaganda touch even the fringe of the

Peasant Question or meet any of the real evils from which the peasants are suffering.

What are the evils that weigh down the peasant population to the unequalled conditions of grinding poverty and misery?

First and foremost is the over-pressure on agriculture. This over-pressure, as has been already explained in the first chapter, is the direct result of British capitalist domination. The mass of the population has been forced, in constantly increasing proportion, on to agriculture, for lack of any other outlet. Under the existing primitive conditions of agriculture, the land is unable to maintain so large a number, still less to provide the vast tribute for parasites, in the shape of Government revenue, taxation, rents to landlords and interest on debts, which is also imposed upon it. The mass of the ryots live in continual starvation and with increasing indebtedness. The size of holdings has grown continuously smaller; the number of landless labourers has increased. Land-hunger is chronic, and more and more intensified.

In order to reach a concrete picture of the existing situation, it will be of value to take the results of a recent scientific enquiry.

In 1917, the Director of Agriculture in Bombay, Dr. Harold H. Mann, made an exhaustive enquiry into the conditions of a typical village in the Deccan. This enquiry was a purely scientific enquiry into actual conditions, cultivation, crops, land-holdings, debts, family income and expenditure, etc., in a typical "dry" village, but it was the first time that such an enquiry had been fully and exhaustively made. The results were so startling (in the words of the author, so "unexpected" and

"depressing") that it was declared in criticism—no other criticism was possible in view of the scientific exactness of the facts—that the conditions of the village in question could not be accepted as typical. Dr. Mann thereupon turned his enquiry to another and different village, and in the ensuing study, published in 1921, reached precisely the same results. It is thus clear that in this enquiry we have a strictly scientific examination which throws a searchlight on actual conditions in an important district in India to-day.

What were the results that Dr. Mann discovered?

He found that in the first village which he examined 81 per cent. of the holdings "could not under the most favourable circumstances maintain their owners." He reached this conclusion on the basis of an estimate of the economic minimum for the ryot's standard of life, which touched the lowest level of scanty food and clothing, with no allowance of such a luxury as artificial light. On this basis he found that those families which were in a "sound economic position" on the basis of their land-holdings numbered 8 out of 103; those which could maintain their position on the basis of their land by the addition of working outside numbered 28; but that those which were in an "unsound" economic position, even on the basis of the fullest earnings from their holding of land and from working outside, numbered 67, or 65 per cent. In the case of the first village, however, there was in the neighbourhood a large ammunition factory which provided outside employment for 30 per cent. of the population; and to this extent the conditions were not typical. In the second village, which was

far removed from any manufacturing or industrial centre, 85 per cent. of the population were in this "unsound" economic position.

What are the reasons that lie behind these appalling figures?

The first reason is the heavy sub-division of holdings. In the first enquiry Dr. Mann found that the average size of a holding had fallen from 40 acres in 1771 to 7 acres in 1915. Dr. Mann recognises that "the excessive sub-division which has progressively increased during British rule is recognised as a very great evil." He does not, however, discuss the cause. This subdivision is only the practical expression of the over-pressure on agriculture which has been the direct result of British policy in India. It is the result of the stifling of all other forms of economic life. The increase of population in India under British rule has been actually less in proportion than the increase of population in European countries; but it has not found the same economic outlet as in European countries.

This basic evil at the root of Indian agricultural poverty can only be overcome first by industrial development and second by the attack on the great estates and cultivable land left idle. This question will be considered further in the discussion of a programme.

The second reason is in the primitive conditions and methods of agriculture in India. This is the inevitable result of the smallness of the holdings, and cannot be overcome without attacking the first evil. The development to modern and more productive methods in agriculture necessitates a turning away from small scale agriculture.

The third reason is the load of burdens upon the peasants in the shape of debt.

With regard to debt, Dr. Mann found that in the first village the interest on debt amounted to two and a half thousand rupees against a total net return from the land of twelve thousand rupees; and in the case of the second village the debt interest amounted to six thousand seven hundred rupees against a net return from the land of fourteen thousand rupees. Thus in the case of the first village "there is hardly any money to pay interest on debts at all unless it is taken from what is usually considered as essential expenses." In the case of the second village, "the actual earnings in an average season are little more than what is required to enable the people to live at their own standard of life and also to pay interest on debts."

An enquiry conducted by the Census Superintendent in the Bombay Presidency in 1921 into 6011 family budgets in the five divisions of the Presidency revealed the following proportion in debt: Gujrat, 41%; Konkan, 55%; Deccan, 52%; Sind, 42%.

The overwhelming existing burden of debt necessarly leads to an extension of debt under any calamity. Thus Dr. Mann found in his 1921 enquiry that the results of 1918-1919, "a genuine famine year" were nothing short of disastrous. "The famine has meant an increase in indebtedness of at least Rs. 13,021 or by over 44 per cent. in the one year. Some of this may be paid off at an early date, but much will probably be permanent either in its present or in some modified form." And in his 1917 enquiry he came to the conclusion that "even at present it would seem that the

economic position of the village must be steadily deteriorating."

This question of debt, and of mortgaged land and expropriation, cannot be dealt with within the existing framework of property rights. It can only be dealt with when the whole question of land tenure is taken in hand, when the question of credits and the annulment of usurious loans is faced, and when the interests of the productive workers are placed in front of the interests of the parasites.

The fourth reason is the burden of rents and government revenue.

With regard to rent, Dr. Mann found that the average rent to a landlord represented half the return a cultivator was able to make, when owning his own land. The actual rent might in some cases be to small land-holders who had given up their holdings and gone to work; in other cases it would represent the gathering of holdings into the hands of large holders, mainly by forfeiture by mortgage. Thus in the case of the second village, the village usurer and shopkeeper, starting from nothing, now held 172 acres and had 50,000 rupees on loan.

In the case of the land held on zemindary tenure the burden of rent is of course very much greater. In Bengal the estimated total rental is twelve million pounds against the Goverment assessment of three million pounds (India Year Book, 1924).

With regard to Government Land Revenue, Dr. Mann found that the assessment in the case of the first village had risen from 889 rupees in 1829/30

to 1660 rupees in 1914/15. This represented about one-eighth of the net return on all crops. The second village showed a similar proportion.

These burdens on the backs of the peasants can only be fought by directly fighting the interests which live on them. The usurers, the big landlords and the Government alike, live on the produce of the peasant's labour, and combine to hold him down in poverty.

Thus the evils at the root of agricultural poverty are found to be: first, subdivision and overcrowding; second, primitive means and methods of production; third, debt; and fourth, rent and taxation.

Now what has the current bourgeois Nationalist or Swarajist propaganda in agriculture to offer to deal with these root evils at the bottom of agricultural poverty? Does the programme of Village Reconstruction and the Charka touch a single one of them? Do they touch the overcrowding of agriculture? Do they show the way to reorganise agriculture or develop industry? Do they lighten for the peasant the burden of the usurer, the landlord, or the tax-gatherer?

On the contrary, they leave all these evils untouched. They propose instead, by the cry of "Back to the Village," an actual increase of the over-pressure on agriculture. They propose the restoration of the old self-sufficing village unit when the whole conditions for itsexistence are destroyed, and the actual need is the modernisation of agriculture. Hand industry cannot exist side by side with machine industry; and with its destruction the whole conditions for its existence are destroyed.

The landlords and usurers will readily subscribe to a sentimental programme of this type which they know can do them no injury and will serve to divert the attack from their own exploitation of the peasants.

The propaganda of the Charka is equally illusory. A propaganda of hand industry based on the subscriptions of wealthy profiteers of machine industry, would in any case be more a matter for laughter than argument. The Spinning Franchise, that pathetic bourgeois echo of the mighty working class revolution in Soviet Russia, has already gone the way of all such bourgeois fads and been replaced in the Congress Constitution by the alternative of a money payment "in the case of illness, unwillingness or any such cause," and finally abolished by the latest decision. The Charka may be imagined to be a form of national propaganda; it certainly cannot be considered to be a serious economic proposal. If the products of machine industry are cheaper, as they are and must be, than the products of hand industry, the masses of India are too poor to do anything but buy the former. It is in any case a poor way of combating poverty to propose the introduction of methods involving more labour for less production, and a proposal of such a type could never have come from the workers themselves.

It is clear therefore that the current Nationalist propaganda in relation to the peasants does not touch the greatest problems of agriculture or the greatest evils facing the peasants. A new programme is needed to win the backing of the peasants.

2. Labour and the Nationalist Movement

The second question confronting the Nationalist Movement is its relation to the organisation of Labour and the needs of the working class.

The Nationalist Movement has always in principle taken up the cause of the workers and proclaimed its unity with their struggle. The Gaya Congress, in 1922, passed a unanimous resolution for the organisation of the workers "to improve and promote their well-being and secure them their just rights, and also to prevent the exploitation of Indian Labour and Indian resources." At the same time a Committee on Labour Organisation "to assist the Executive of the All-Indian Trades Union Congress for the organisation of Indian Labour, both agricultural and industrial" was set up. A similar resolution had been passed at Nagpur in 1920.

These resolutions, however, have not been of any great practical importance.

The Swaraj Party, from the outset, laid great stress on the organisation of Labour, and made it one of the first planks in its platform. The leaders of the Swaraj Party have played an active part in the organisation and leadership of the Indian Trades Union Congress; and C. R. Das, the Swarajist leader, sat on the Executive of the latter body. Thus the Swaraj Party has endeavoured to occupy the position of political leader of the organised workers. Indeed, on one occasion, C. R. Das, in an address to the Trades Union Congress, went so far as to say :—

> "If the middle-class ever win Swaraj and I live to see that day, it will be my lot to stand by the

workers and peasants and to lead them on to wrest power from the hands of the selfish classes."

Nevertheless, despite these sentiments, the action of the Nationalist Movement so far in relation to the workers has shown a wide gulf of separation from them, and has indeed been of a reactionary character. While expressions of general or future sympathy have been freely made, the actual demands and needs of the workers have not been taken up. The horrible conditions of the Bombay slums have been the theme of eloquent perorations; but the fight against the interests which live upon these tenements, or which pay the starvation wages has never been undertaken. The Nationalist Movement has sought to live upon support of the rich mill-owners and merchants; and the infamous dividends of these, rising to 100, 200, and even 300 per cent., made out of the unscrupulous exploitation of the workers, have never been denounced.

The condition of the industrial workers in India is among the worst in the world. Sweating and long hours, the exploitation of women and children, starvation wages, fines and the withholding of wages due, foul and pestilential housing, these and a hundred other evils of the most primitive days of capitalism are to be found wholesale, in the advanced and highly developed capitalist production of India and under the enlightened Imperialist Government.

Nevertheless the programme of the Nationalist organisations would be scanned in vain for any comprehensive programme of Labour demands. Such bare and elementary needs as housing, a minimum wage, shorter hours, health legislation, protective

legislation and organisation rights receive no place in the existing programmes and propaganda of the Nationalist Movement.

In action the position is even more serious. Despite the taking up of the reins of the Trades Union Congress, the practical assistance to the workers' struggle has often been more than lacking. Political control of the trade unions has been assumed, rather to hold and to teach the workers to submit quietly to their exploitation, instead of teaching and helping the workers to fight against their conditions. Strikes have constantly been refused the support of the Nationalist leaders, whose intervention has always been an intervention in favour of "conciliation," *i.e.*, of submission to the employers.* In this way the Trades Union Congress has been deflected from its true purpose of an organ of the class struggle into an organ of class conciliation or betrayal of the class struggle; and the great strikes that have taken place have been again and again spontaneous strikes of the masses of the workers, often in the face of the opposition of the organisations which were supposed to represent their interests.

Finally, the general policy of the Nationalist Movement has shown so far a complete subserviency to the interests of the propertied minority and a disregard to the interests of the workers. The Swaraj Party, which began with a proclamation of a new

* It is disgraceful that in the appeal of the Bombay textile workers in the great lock-out of 1925, the resulting assistance showed, according to press reports, £1,000 from the Russian Trade Unions, £1,200 from the British Trade Unions, and from the wealthy Indian Nationalist Movement to their countrymen in distress, £100. So much thicker is class interest for the bourgeoisie than any sentiment of national solidarity.

understanding of the rights and claims of Labour, hastened to lay down as its first actual basis the guarantee of the inviolability of "private and individual property" and "the growth of individual wealth." The betrayal of the interests of the workers, whenever a question of capitalist interests has been at stake, has been universal; a striking illustration occurred in the episode already referred to of the Tata subsidy, when Mr. Joshi's amendment, in favour of a minimum wage as a condition of the subsidy, received no suppport from any of the Swarajist members.

What is the reason for this failure in practice despite all the professions of sympathy with Labour? The reason lies in the fact that the Nationalist Movement has never yet sincerely endeavoured to represent the interests of the masses of the nation, but has only endeavoured to use them for tactical purposes, while remaining tied in fact to the interests of the moneyed class. The approach to the workers and peasants is fundamentally false. This is revealed in the language of even the most advanced and progressive expressions of sympathy with the Labour cause. The outlook which is expressed is an outlook that regards the workers and peasants, that is the 98 per cent. of the nation, as something outside, as some alien element, which has to be won over, utilised, organised for the national cause—but which is not the nation.

An examination of the famous presidential declaration of C. R. Das, at the Gaya Congress, in favour of Labour organisation, when he was even supposed to be moving in a socialist direction, will reveal this very clearly. The essential portion of

his declaration on the organisation of the peasants and workers was as follows :—

> "The Congress should take up the work of Labour and peasant organisation . . . Is the service of this special interest in any way antagonistic to the service of Nationalism? To find bread for the poor, to secure justice to a class of people who are engaged in a particular class of occupation—how is that work any different from the work of attaining Swaraj? . . . We have delayed the moment already too long. If the Congress fails to do its duty, we may expect to find organisations set up in the country by labourers and peasants detached from you, disassociated from the cause of Swaraj, which will inevitably bring into the arena of the peaceful revolution class struggles and the war of special interests. If the object of Congress is to avoid this disgraceful issue, let us take Labour and the peasantry in hand, and let us organise them from the point of view of their own interests and also from the point of view of the higher ideal which demands the satisfaction of their special interests and the devotion of such interests to the cause of Swaraj."

This statement deserves analysis. What does the speaker say? He says that "we" must organise the millions of peasants and workers for fear that they may otherwise organise themselves separately from "us," and disastrous struggles ensue. Who then is this "we" for whose sake the workers and peasants must be organised? Clearly not the workers and peasants themselves, the 98 per cent., since these are excluded. "We" in other words, is

simply the bourgeoisie and their hangers-on, the 2 per cent. The bourgeoisie is admonished to "take Labour and the peasantry in hand," lest these should otherwise organise themselves separately, and disastrous struggles, *i.e.*, disastrous to the interests of the bourgeoisie, ensue.

Thus the whole expression of so-called sympathy to Labour is only an expression of hostility and distrust to Labour, and the whole affirmation of so-called superior national interests, as opposed to special class interests, is only an affirmation of the class interests of the bourgeois minority. The working class cause is to be "taken in hand" in precisely the same way as British Imperialism decided in the Montague-Chelmsford Report to "take in hand" the cause of Indian Nationalism.

In contrast to this type of position it is necessary to bring a new outlook into the national struggle: an outlook which recognises the productive working masses as constituting the real nation, which does not place the class interests of the 2 per cent. before the interests of the masses, but which instead recognises the true national interests as the interests of the working masses.

Before, however, coming to the consideration of this question of a constructive programme, it is necessary to review one more element in the problem of a mass movement which Indian Nationalism has to face—the religious and racial element.

Chapter VI.

RELIGIOUS AND RACIAL QUESTIONS

A further problem in the path of a united mass movement in India is the question of religious and racial divisions.

Here, the necessity of overcoming these divisions has been recognised, again in principle, in the Nationalist Movement. But the necessary measures to combat these divisions have not been taken up. On the contrary, through a dangerous conception of tactics, these divisions have been fomented.

Religious and racial conflicts are in general powerful in a society in proportion as that society is socially backward. They represent in part, a reflection of old antagonisms, whose real basis has already vanished, but whose ideology has not been removed owing to the decay of social and ideological development; in part actual current economic antagonisms appearing in a disguised form.

In pre-capitalist society, religious and racial antagonisms play a large role, because the existing forms of social organisation are largely expressed through religious and racial forms. Religious wars and racial wars or feuds are commonly direct expressions of struggles for existence of whole communities, or struggles of social groups within a community.

In capitalist society, these divisions already lose their meaning, except in so far as they become the

vehicle of actual class division. In a capitalist shareholders' company, religion and race are a matter of complete indifference. The only interest is the block of shares held. Capitalism knows no frontier and operates in the whole world, wherever the rate of profit is highest. Only where a species of class exploitation is expressed through a racial form, do racial divisions become important under capitalism, as in the case of negroes in the United States, the relations of the British and "coloured" races, etc. Hence the so-called racial question under capitalism is essentially a question of exploitation. Capitalism, also, while itself completely cosmopolitan in its outlook makes use of racial divisions and traditional antagonisms in order to maintain its rule and carry out its policies : *e.g.*, in the Imperialist War, when dying national antagonisms were artificially fanned into flame, in the Balkans, in the support of Mohammedans against Hindus in India, in anti-Semitism in Europe, etc. These desperate expedients play an increasing part as capitalism declines. Thus racial antagonisms appear to reach their highest point under modern capitalism, and particularly in Europe, when in reality their whole social basis has completely disappeared.

In communist society all racial and religious antagonisms disappear, and give place to the direct equal human relation of all men and women as workers. The beginnings of this new culture are already visible in Trade Union and Labour organisation, where divisions of religion, race and the like play no part (except where sections of the workers have been temporarily corrupted into union with the capitalists and cut off from the inter-

national movement, as in certain "White Labour" organisations.)

In Soviet Russia, which shows most clearly the beginnings of the workers' society of the future, there is complete freedom and equality of all races and religions; and all workers, of whatever origin or nationality, have equal right to citizenship on the simple basis of their human claim as productive members of society. In consequence, the innumerable racial and religious feuds, massacres, pogroms, etc., which marked the history of Tsarist Russia, have completely disappeared.

The key to overcoming racial and religious divisions is therefore to be found in progressive social development, and above all in working class solidarity. Already, in the most progressive elements and tendencies of capitalism, the means of combating these divisions can be found—in democracy, in universal education, in the removal of all pre-capitalist social barriers, privileges and divisions, and in the spread of modern technical and scientific knowledge. The fullest and most effective combating can only come with socialism and the working class movement.

For this reason the advance of social development is of particular importance for the political development of India.

The Nationalist Movement, on the other hand, has followed an entirely different path. Instead of trying to obliterate racial and religious differences on the basis of new and larger social interests, they have endeavoured to revive and intensify religious and racial traditions and outlooks, and then, on the basis of these, achieve a sectional combination, and call it Unity.

This has been the whole basis of the Hindu-Moslem Unity Campaign. The results have been as disastrous as they were inevitable.

The Hindu-Moslem Unity Campaign endeavoured to add to the propaganda of revived Hinduism, which the old Extremists had introduced before the War, a further propaganda of the specific demands of the Mohammedans in relation to the Sèvres Treaty and the Khilafat. By this means, by the combination of their demands, Hindu-Moslem Unity was proclaimed after the War.

The artificial character of the whole Khilafat Campaign, not only in relation to the needs of the Indian masses, but also in relation to the modern social and economic realities of the Moslem world, was revealed at a stroke when the Turkish national leaders themselves calmly abolished the Khilafat, and not a sign or ripple followed. Yet the effect of endeavouring to promote unity on the basis of these artificially inflamed communal differences, instead of on the basis of real common interests, was inescapable. Hindu and Moslem sectional consciousness was stimulated and intensified by the national leaders themselves; and the increased intensity of antagonisms and discords that followed, during the past two years, though it was deplored by these national leaders, was the inevitable result of their own actions.

The Bengal Hindu-Moslem Pact of C. R. Das, by which unity was sought to be obtained by a guaranteed future proportion of offices in Hindu and Moslem hands respectively, in a future Nationalist India (a revealing of the bourgeois conception of Swaraj), was essentially an example of the same policy. It was again an attempt to build up unity

on the basis of sectional differences, when these sectional differences are the enemy of unity.

What is the basis of these ruinous, these "Himalayan" errors, which have proved such a menace to the cause of national unity? Their basis is to be found in a fundamental false conception, which runs very deep and which needs to be fought. This conception lies in the belief that the path to Indian development and freedom lies, not along the line of social development, of overcoming old weaknesses and divisions and harmful traditions, but along the line of social retrogression, of stimulating and reviving the outlooks and relics of the past.

This conception is so important that it is worth while to analyse it with some care.

How did this conception arise? The conception was introduced by the Extremists in opposition to the old moderate Nationalists. The Extremists saw the old upper class Nationalists saturated with the "denationalised" outlook and methods, learning, social life and politics of the British bourgeoisie. Against this "denationalisation" or capitulation to British culture, they sought to lead a revolt. But on what basis could they lead a revolt?

They were themselves tied to the narrow range of the bourgeois outlook, and could not see the workings of capitalism. In consequence they could not see that the so-called "British" culture they were inveighing against was in reality the culture of capitalism, and that the only real opposition to this culture could come from the working class. They could not, on the basis of experience then in India, have any conception of the rising working class outlook and culture which alone can be the alternative and successor to bourgeois culture, going

beyond it, taking what is of value and leaving the rest. Therefore, when they came to look for a firm ground of opposition to the conquerors' culture, they could only find for a basis the pre-capitalist culture of India before the conquest.

So, from the existing foul welter of decaying and corrupt metaphysics, from the broken relics of the shattered village system, from the dead remains of court splendours of a vanished civilisation, they sought to fabricate and build up and reconstitute a golden dream of Hindu culture—a "purified" Hindu culture—which they could hold up as an ideal and a guiding light.

Against the overwhelming flood of British bourgeois culture and ideology, that is to say of the culture and ideology of capitalist robbery which was completely conquering the Indian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, they sought to hold forward the feeble shield of a reconstructed Hindu ideology which had no longer any natural basis for its existence in actual life conditions. All social and scientific development was condemned as the conquerors' culture: every form of antiquated tradition, abuse, privilege and obscurantism was treated with veneration and respect.

So it came about that the national leaders of the people, who should have been leading the people forward along the path of emancipation and understanding, away from all the evil relics of the past, appeared instead as the champions of reaction and superstition, caste privilege and division, as the allies of all the "black" forces, seeking to hold down the fetters upon the people.

The Extremists believed that in this way they were building up the masses. Only so can it be

explained that a man of the intellectual calibre of Tilak should have lent himself to such agitations as his campaign in defence of child-marriage or his Anti-Cow-Killing Society.

But the policy was not only vicious in principle, but also mistaken in tactics. The path to the masses does not lie through the superstitions which are their enemy.

Revivals of this sort are not to be manufactured. The social conditions which gave rise to the old conceptions have passed away. The endeavour to build on the past means not only to follow a socially reactionary policy, to maintain every form of superstition, degrading custom and inhuman social division, but it means also to build upon a foundation of sand.

As against the artificial revival of a reconstructed Hindu or pre-capitalist ideology, the advanced ideology of the British conquerors will win every time, as it is already visibly doing.

In their actual daily lives and actions, in their manipulation of companies and financial operations, in their running of factories and exploitation of the workers, in their technical and administrative methods, and in the social, intellectual and political life accompanying these operations, the Indian bourgeoisie are in fact and inevitably learning from and imitating the advanced bourgeoisie all over the world. If, by the side of these real activities, they indulge a little of their leisure in dilettante pursuits of the promotion of some old religious forms, or even in dallying with a spinning wheel for an hour a day (an occupation which has rapidly palled and been abandoned even by the ardent Nationalist sec-

tion of the Indian bourgeoisie), it is idle to believe that this fashionable make-believe can have the slightest effect on the real processes at work.

On the other hand, the adoption of a socially reactionary programme has and will have the most disastrous effects on the Nationalist Movement. It means inevitably a complete divorce from the masses. It means a complete alliance with the old surviving feudal forces and privileges whose overthrow is certain. It means that the bourgeoisie, in order to maintain its position, consciously endeavours to build on and maintain popular superstition and ignorance.

This is a world process which is taking place. The progressive modern bourgeoisie, while using the most up-to-date machinery in the factories to make profits, is ready to dive into the past for all kinds of cults and superstitions of barbarism, ignorance, submission to God, etc., in order to spread these among the masses. This kind of spiritual reaction and revival of mediævalism is a familiar feature of modern capitalism all over the world (compare the "Catholic Revival" in Western Europe). It is simply a mark of capitalist decline. The spiritually reactionary propaganda of Gandhism is an enemy of the interests of the masses.

It is a delusion that old relics of superstition and religion are so firmly rooted in the masses that a mass movement can only be built upon this basis. The relics of obsolete social forms remain long quiescent until the moment of crisis comes; then they are thrown off in an instant, if there is no reality behind them. The experience of country

after country shows this, and none more than Russia. Before 1917, every bourgeois observer declared that the cult of the "Little Father" and orthodoxy was deeply rooted in the Russian peasants and rendered them impervious to all possibility of a revolution—till the revolution came. Then the mighty Russian revolution showed the power of the masses to throw off these relics when the time for advance came.

But there is one very important difference in the experience of the Russian and Indian movements which is worth noting.

The Russian revolutionary movement had the clearness and the courage to build upon the future and not on the past, to build on the real forces of social development and not on Utopian visions of a golden past; to build on the real, deep and underlying needs and forces of the masses, and not on the teeming welter of decaying traditions and beliefs.

The political weakness of the Indian movement lies precisely in the socially reactionary character of its programme and outlook.

The ideology of the future, which will be strong enough to withstand and conquer the bourgeois ideology represented by the British conquerors, is and can only be the proletarian ideology, which will develop and build itself up in the course of the social and political development of India.

Indian Nationalism must build its basis firmly on the line of social development and break completely with the reactionary elements of the past. It is necessary to fight the old relics of past subjection and ignorance, which exist in India as everywhere

(and all the more in India owing to the arrested development) and also to fight the cancers of bourgeois civilisation. The strength to fight both these can only come, not from the past, but from the social forces of the future—from the workers and peasants in conjunction with the awakened intellectuals. This is the necessary path to a free united India. Every support to social reaction is a support to Indian discord and Indian subjection. The advance to political emancipation necessitates also the advance to intellectual and social emancipation.

Chapter VII.

THE AIM OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

What is "Swaraj"?

It is a very striking and significant fact that no clear or common definition of "Swaraj" has yet been given by the responsible leaders of Indian Nationalism. Indeed many of the leaders have even boasted that "Swaraj" cannot be defined; that "Swaraj" is an indefinable mystery. This was the position taken up by C. R. Das in the passage already quoted from his Gaya Presidential Address in 1922 :—

> "A question has often been asked as to what is "Swaraj." Swaraj is indefinable, and is not to be confused with any particular system of government. Swaraj is the natural expression of the national mind, and must necessarily cover the whole history of the nation."

But if "Swaraj" is an indefinable mystery, why come forward and ask millions to fight for it? The masses of men will not fight for an indefinable mystery which means nothing to them. The masses of India are struggling against real evils, even though they are still seeking to find the path. The task of leadership is to show the path forward clearly, and not to talk of indefinable mysteries.

The national struggle is already a mighty movement throughout India. But this movement is still

confused in programme, aim and organisation, and therefore finding difficulty to reach its goal. To remove these difficulties and free the way forward for this gathering mass movement is the task to-day; and for this task the first need is clearness of aim.

1. Independence from Imperialist Domination

The national struggle is a struggle against Imperialist Domination. This much is clear and agreed.

But why? What for? Why against Imperialist Domination? On the answer to this depends clearness of aim.

Imperialist Domination is the enemy of the Indian people because it represents the rule of a foreign exploiting class, which represses the development of the Indian people, holds them in social and political subjection, and uses them for its profit.

For the peasant Imperialist Domination represents, not only heavy taxation, but also the power which maintains him in subjection, which uses armed might and the manipulations of the law courts to hold him in thraldom to those who exploit him, which sends soldiers when he seeks to win the land. For the worker in the towns, Imperialist Domination is revealed in the guns and tanks which are let loose in the streets when he goes on strike, and the whole machinery of the State which is at the service of the employer. For the clerk and the small professional man, Imperialist Domination is revealed in colour discrimination, in inequality which holds him down in poverty, in heavy taxation of the necessaries of life he has to buy, and in the

preserving of posts and positions for the ruling race. Even for the Indian bourgeoisie, Imperialist Domination means the relegation to a subordinate position, the cramping of enterprise by uncontrollable restrictions, and the skimming of the cream of profit by the Imperialist bourgeoisie through their superior financial and Government powers.

Thus, for all these many strata Imperialist Domination represents the immediate enemy. It is the enemy because it is the principal agent and machine of exploitation. Imperialism is a form of exploitation. The struggle against Imperialism is a struggle against exploitation.

When the masses of India seek to move forward to social liberation, they find the British Government blocking the way. Therefore they are compelled to recognise the British Government as the immediate obstacle in the path, which must be first overcome in order that they may advance to social liberation.

For the masses of India the struggle against Imperialism is thus simply a part of their struggle towards social liberation, a part of the struggle against exploitation. The national struggle is thus part of the social struggle.

To realise the aim of this national struggle, the Indian people need to liberate themselves completely from Imperialist Domination—*i.e.*, to achieve complete independence. Nothing less than this can afford the possibility of throwing off Imperialist exploitation.

The aim of the national struggle is therefore complete Independence for India from Imperialist rule or connection.

2. The Fallacy of Dominion Status.

Can this liberation from Imperialist Domination be realised in some partial form, by some form of alliance or compromise with the Imperialists, such as is proposed in the various projects of "Dominion Status"?

No. Once it is clear that the real struggle is against Imperialist exploitation, then it is clear that no alliance with the exploiters can give liberation. The Indian capitalists might approve some such form of partnership with the Imperialist exploiters for the sake of increased profits, and call it "freedom": but it would be no freedom at all for the Indian nation. Some form of constitutional change might be carried out, which would confer a nominal "autonomy" under the Empire but would leave the reality of Imperialist exploitation firmer than before. Such a "liberation" would be completely illusory. Indeed it has been the whole purpose of the previous analysis of conditions and policies in India to-day to show that such a position is part of the aim of modern Imperialist policy.

The aim of the Indian nation must be complete independence. There are many (not only British but also Indians) who say that the Indian people are "unready" for complete independence, that they have had no experience to govern themselves, that the result would be chaos, and that they still need for a while the tutelage of the British rulers. But this means to accept exploitation and the continuance of exploitation. Once it is understood that the reality of Imperialism is not "tutelage" but exploitation, then the whole of this false argument instilled by the exploiters falls to the ground, and

it becomes clear that the Indian people can only begin to learn to rule themselves when they have thrown off the yoke of the exploiters.

Of a similar character is the argument that it is in vain to propose to throw off the yoke of British Imperialist domination, since it would only be replaced at once by some other Imperialist domination of one or another power. This is equivalent to a householder arguing that it is useless to raise a finger against a robber who is taking off his goods, since, even if this robber is driven off, another one will come to-morrow and then get them. It is like arguing that it is useless to take a meal to-day because we shall only be hungry again to-morrow. The force of the argument is the exact contrary. If we take a meal to-day, we shall be stronger to get food to-morrow. If the householder drives off the robber to-day, the other robbers will think twice before coming. And if the Indian people are strong enough to throw off British Imperialist Domination, the most powerful in the world, then after that victory it is not likely that any other Imperialism will be strong enough to subject them.

A section of the bourgeoisie supports Dominion Status—or so-called "Swaraj within the Empire" (a contradiction in terms). But this support is simply based on class interest, on the fear of losing their privileged position in a free India and the consequent desire for a junior partnership with the British bourgeoisie.

An examination of the statements of the leaders who support the Imperialist connection will show this, and show that they have no reasons to offer which are valid for the Indian nation. The state-

ments of two of the principal leaders, Gandhi and Das, may be taken.

Gandhi's statement, made in his Presidential Address at the Belgaum Congress in December, 1924, runs as follows :—

> "The above sketch presupposes the retention of the British connection on perfectly honourable and absolutely equal terms. But I know that there is a section among Congressmen who want under every conceivable circumstance complete independence of Britain. They will not have even an equal partnership. In my opinion, if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would therefore strive for Swaraj within the British Empire."

This statement contains no arguments. In his previous speeches during the period of mass agitation, Gandhi called the British Empire "satanic." He now not only desires "honourable co-operation" with Satan, but expects that Satan will "honestly help us to equality." This pitiful collapse is clearly only an expression of surrender to stronger forces, and we must look elsewhere for the character of those forces.

When we turn to Das's speech at Faridpur, in May, 1925, we come to firmer ground. Here the gospel of Imperialism, not only for India but for the world at large, is plainly stated :—

> "The Empire gives a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion Status to-day is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the Empire for material

advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. Under modern conditions no nation can live in isolation and the Dominion Status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent element composing the great Commonwealth of Nations called the British Empire, secures to each the right to realise itself, develop itself and fulfil itself, and therefore it expresses and implies all those elements of Swaraj which I have mentioned. To me the idea is specially attractive because of its deep spiritual significance. I believe in world peace, in the ultimate federation of the world; and I think that the great commonwealth of nations called the British Empire if properly led by statesmen at the helm is bound to make a lasting contribution to the great problem of knitting the world into the greatest federation the mind can conceive, the federation of the human race." ("Bombay Chronicle," 4th April, 1925.)

This statement is a full-blooded statement of Imperialism. The speaker desires to participate in the Empire for the sake of the "material advantages" which it will bring. (To whom? Not to the toiling millions of India out of whose poverty and exploitation the "material advantages" of Empire are won, but only to the handful of Indian capitalists who wish to share the profits of the British Imperialists.) He accepts the commonplace and insincere description of the British Empire as "a great Commonwealth of Nations," regardless of the enslaved nations all over the world on which it rests; he discovers in the Empire a "deep spiritual significance"; he hopes to see in the British Empire the path to "the federation of the human race."

What is the meaning of these arguments?

The speaker advocates the continuance within the Empire because—

1. It brings "Material advantages."
2. It "affords complete protection."
3. It provides "all the elements of Swaraj" which the speaker desires to see.

If these three arguments are set out in plain terms they run—

1. Alliance of the weaker Indian bourgeoisie with the stronger Imperialist bourgeoisie will mean "material advantages" for the former.
2. The same alliance will afford "complete protection" against the enemy both without and within, since the Imperialist army and navy will continue to "guard" them, against the Indian masses.
3. In consequence there will be no danger of "Swaraj" going beyond the limits the speaker desires to set for it—*i.e.*, of moving towards the social emancipation of the masses.

These are all solid arguments of the Indian bourgeoisie for the Imperialist connection. But for the Indian masses, these arguments apply in a directly opposite direction. The very gains and security which the Indian upper class desires to get out of the continuance of the Imperialist connection mean for the Indian masses the continuance of servitude.

Against these complete arguments of the bourgeoisie may be set the reasons why full independence should be the aim of the Indian nation :—

1. Dominion Status, which still leaves the ultimate Imperialist military control, will not give national liberation. British Imperialism

is ready to hand over administration progressively (though as gradually as possible) into the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie, while all the time building up and entrenching the reality of British power behind the whole apparatus of so-called self-government. This reality of power, which Imperialism builds up behind the apparatus of self-government, is, as Chapter III has already shown, commercial and financial, with the ultimate sanction of military power behind it. Dominion Status is simply the expression of this most advanced form of Imperialism.

2. Imperialism is not and cannot be an instrument of peace. Imperialism, as Lenin has explained in his book on the question, is the policy of expansion of Finance Capital : and this policy cannot be carried out without extreme and recurrent violence and war, both against the subject races which are enslaved and between the rival Imperialists. To speak of Imperialism as an instrument of peace and of "the federation of the world" is to show a complete blindness to the whole meaning of the Imperialist War of 1914-1918, which will inevitably be repeated on a larger scale if Imperialism continues. The tying up of India in the Empire, therefore, so far from being a guarantee of "protection" and of "peace," is a guarantee of involving India in future war on a gigantic scale.
3. Many subject races outside India are held under the subjection of the Empire all over the world. For the Indian nation to desire to enter the privileged ranks of Dominion Status

would mean to desire to participate, with the white rulers, in the subjection of these enslaved peoples. This is an aim which at a certain stage will seem perfectly natural to the Indian bourgeoisie, since Imperialism is an outcome of a certain stage of capitalist development. But it is a position which should be unthinkable to the mass of the Indian nation.

These reasons should be sufficient to make clear the necessity of full independence as the aim of the national struggle.

In point of fact the whole trend of Indian opinion is increasingly moving towards the goal of full independence. This fact is admitted with alarm by the bourgeois supporters of the Imperialist connection. An illuminating statement may be quoted from Mr. Rangachariar, Deputy President of the Legislative Assembly, speaking in 1924 :—

"There is a strong body of influential people in India which is trying to keep up the tie between India and the Empire; but frankly speaking the movement for separation is rapidly extending, and unless something tangible in the shape of fuller constitutional reforms is done, within two or three years' time it will be beyond our control or the control of anybody at all."

The inevitable movement of the Indian people towards the goal of full independence will not be stayed by all the efforts of the small handful at the top who prefer service with the British bourgeoisie.

3. What Must be the Form of Swaraj?

Independence is sometimes criticised as a "negative" ideal. The criticism is correct; but the real

force of the criticism (which is actually often used as an argument in favour of Imperialist exploitation) is not always understood.

Of course independence is "negative," because independence is not in itself any permanent goal or ideal, but is simply the removal of an obstacle, the winning of a means to give something else. The only positive goal is and alone can be social liberation.

If "Swaraj" only means the replacement of Imperialist Domination by national bourgeois domination, the replacement of the rule of the British bankers, traders and militarists by the rule of Indian merchants, landlords, sweaters, ruling princes and moneyed classes, then no real gain at all will have been won by the Indian people save in the tactical sense that the enemy will have been weakened. Their real struggle will be in front; their sufferings and exploitation still continue.

National "freedom" which does not bring social freedom is only a very limited gain. The history of Europe for the past century has illustrated this again and again. The great national movements, the national "liberations," have ended in the pitiful bondage, the violent contrasts and inequalities, and the real slavery of capitalist Europe, because the social struggle has not been fought out and social freedom won. National liberation can be no more than a clearing stage for the winning of social freedom.

Real liberation is social—that is, the ending of class divisions and exploitation by the common entry of the whole people into the possession of their country (ultimately on a world scale), into the

wealth and means of livelihood, into the common sharing of work and the return on work.

The achievement of this is a long process, involving many stages of economic, social and political development. But the overthrow of Imperialism, the winning of "Swaraj" or independence, is only of value as a stage to this.

Therefore the Indian people in fighting for "Swaraj" will strive to win the greatest possible social emancipation, to develop the national revolution as rapidly as possible into the social revolution. The Indian people will only begin to free themselves in reality in proportion as they win power into their own hands, into the hands of the workers and peasants.

This is accordingly the supreme governing principle in every issue of the form of "Swaraj," of the social and political forms to be evolved in the moment of change.

The primary necessity for the workers and peasants is to secure the possibility of further advance—to secure, that is to say, the rights of combination, of agitation and of the press, of public meeting, of universal suffrage and the abolition of hereditary privilege. To this extent the immediate objective will be the type of National Democratic State.

But the actual form of the National Democratic State will depend on the stage of social development reached, on the strength of the workers' and peasants' organisation and on the relative strength of the bourgeoisie. India will not necessarily go through a repetition of all the stages of Western Europe, but may develop far more rapidly. There is no necessity to reproduce the discredited forms

of parliamentary democracy of the West, which make a mockery of popular representation and whose so-called liberties are a sham. Freer forms of popular representation may be adopted, corresponding more closely to the social groupings of the people, and so affording wider scope for the agitation and advance of the workers and peasants.. It may be that in the melting pot of social transformation the workers and peasants may be already able to win a strong position and secure a point of vantage from which they may rapidly advance to power and to real social changes.

The forms of "Swaraj" will, in short, depend on the stage of social development and the circumstances of the transition. But the real change towards social freedom will only begin when the workers in alliance with the peasants win power and begin the task of social transformation. In consequence the value of "Swaraj" to the workers and peasants, and to the small middle-class and intellectuals whose interests are bound up with them, that is to the overwhelming majority of the nation, will depend entirely on the extent to which it affords them the opportunity of advancing to the realisation of their aims, of the aim of social liberation.

Chapter VIII.

WHAT MUST BE DONE

The fight for national liberation is a fight of many social strata—of workers, of peasants, of the lower middle class, of the intelligentsia and even of a section of the bourgeoisie.

To carry out this fight a common organisation is needed, pursuing the aim of complete independence from Imperialist domination.

Such an organisation can only be realised on the basis of a common programme embodying the immediate needs and aims of all the principal sections united within it. Without such a programme effective combination for the struggle is impossible. For the workers, for the peasants, and for the lower middle class, who together constitute, not merely the vast majority, but practically the whole nation, "Swaraj" can only be a phrase without meaning, unless it clearly represents the means towards realising their own aspirations. This can only be expressed by a common national programme embodying their immediate demands and needs.

The first task of organisation, therefore, is to reach such a common programme. Once the lines of such a common programme are agreed, the further questions of organisation can be considered.

1. A Programme for the National Movement

What must such a programme embrace?

In the first place, it is necessary to include common demands for those rights without which effective agitation is impossible—the rights of free speech, press and public meetings, and universal suffrage.

In the second place, it is necessary to take up immediate questions which affect the daily lives of the peasants, the workers, the small profesional class, etc. These questions include, above all, the questions of the Land, of Taxation, of Labour Conditions, of Health and Social Conditions, and of Education.

In none of these directions has the existing Nationalist Movement yet put out a clear programme. The present analysis is not the place to attempt to put out any detailed programme, which must necessarily be the outcome of very considerable collective work and study. But it may be worth while to consider very shortly some of the principles involved in each group of questions.

(*a*) Civil Rights

The first necessity of any widespread popular agitation and organisation is the winning of the elementary civil rights of free speech, press, meeting and combination. The fight for these is the first basic fight which should unite all sections of the national movement.

The fundamental rights to be fought for, comprise :—

1. Freedom of speech.
2. Freedom of the press.
3. Freedom of association.

4. Universal suffrage.
5. Abolition of hereditary privileges and caste distinctions.
6. Abolition of all religious and racial discrimination.

The National Movement as a whole should take up the defence of every newspaper prosecuted, of every prisoner for opinion, and of every form of Indian combination or organisation attacked by the Government.

The demand for the repeal of the Press Laws, Special Ordinances and all repressive legislation is of vital importance in the forefront of every campaign.

This agitation is the core of all agitation. By its means the political issue is most clearly brought out.

(*b*) The Land

The land is clearly the central social and economic question for India at the present stage. The programme of the National Movement on the land determines the extent to which the National Movement can represent the masses of the peasantry.

The conditions of the land question have been discussed in Chapter V. Statistics show that of the 221 millions dependent on agriculture, 9.9 million belong to the landlord class (returned as dependent on rent), 37.8 million are landless labourers and their families, and the remaining 173 million represent the small farmers and peasantry.

It is necessary to be clear at the outset whether the programme shall represent the ten millions of the landlord class or the two hundred and ten millions of the peasantry and landless labourers. It is

not possible to represent the interests of both. Agriculture at present yields no surplus, and not even a living minimum; and all those who live on the backs of the actual cultivators are necessarily their enemies. A national programme, which genuinely represents the nation, *i.e.*, the mass of the nation, cannot put the interests of the ten million before the interests of the 210 million.

It is not possible to meet the realities of the land problem with general proposals of agricultural development or village reconstruction, which do not tackle the central question of land tenure.* The peasantry and landless labourers are starved for want of land. The average holding for India as a whole is under five acres. In England and Wales the average area cultivated per worker is 21 acres, and in the large agriculture of America, Argentine and South Africa it runs up to 460 acres (B. Narain, "The Population of India," page 176.) On their existing small holdings and with their available equipment, a large proportion of the cultivators inevitably sink into debt; and the burden of debt interest, government revenue and taxation inevitably drives them down further. The basic question of the land therefore gets more urgent every year. Statistics show that the pressure on the land is continually increasing.

*The recently-appointed Government Agricultural Commission (1926) is specifically prohibited in the terms of reference from considering land tenure or Government land revenue :—

> "It will not be within the scope of the Commission's duties to make recommendations regarding the existing systems of land ownership and tenancy, or of assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges."

Nevertheless, this Commission is supposed to report on "the main factors affecting the rural prosperity and welfare of the agricultural population"!

In part the expansion of industrial production will inevitably relieve the situation; and the development of agricultural methods and equipment will gradually raise the level of returns from the land. But these are long processes, which cannot affect the immediate crisis.

The question of landlordism, of the large estates, of heavy rents and dues and of the exactions of the money lender will have to be faced. The National Movement will have to range itself unhesitatingly with the 210 millions of the peasantry and landless labourers against the united interests of the Government and big landowners.

The only final solution of the land question lies in the social ownership of land and the organisation of large-scale production, thus eliminating waste, parasitic tribute, unscientific tillage and the barbaric squandering of labour without adequate equipment. This requires the expropriation of the big landowners and the nationalisation of the land. But the organisation of collective large-scale production is necessarily a long process, requiring many stages; and it is necessary first to assist the peasantry to reach a sronger economic basis in order to be able to develop wider co-operative organisation.

The first need of the peasantry and landless labourers is land. The great estates must be expropriated and handed over to the peasantry and landless labourers as has been done to a greater or less extent in many European countries since the War. There is not a question here of developing small-scale production in preference to large; but on the contrary the object is to place the peasantry on such a basis that they can then develop further

and reach, through increasing co-operation, to the gradual transformation to large-scale production.

Recent figures show the following proportion of cultivated and uncultivated land in British India for 1921-22.

	Million acres.
Cultivated	
Net area sown	223.1
Fallow	54·5
Uncultivated	
Forests not available for cultivation	153.1
Cultivable Waste other than fallow	151.2

(India Year Book, 1924, page 268.)

The figure of "Cultivable waste other than fallow" is a very large proportion of the whole—151 million out of 663 million acres. All such land as can be economically brought into cultivation urgently needs to be brought into cultivation with State assistance, and to be made available to the peasants.

As an immediate step all existing rents need to be reduced; and all arbitrary exactions whether of forced labour, provision of food, or special levies (for marriage festivals, hunting and the like) should be abolished. The same applies to the imposition of special levies, or labour requirements from Government. The Government land revenue, which has heavily increased, needs to be brought down to a fixed minimum proportion of the actual produce: and this can be brought down to a very low total figure of rent for the peasantry, once the drain of private rent and special exactions is removed or reduced (compare the Bengal total rental of twelve

million pounds with the assessment of three million pounds) and in proportion as the bulk of taxation is increasingly raised from income.

Against the burden of debt drastic measures need to be taken. The National programme should demand the prohibition of foreclosures, the legal limitation of interest and the provision of cheap credit. The existing burden of debt might with advantage be brought before the review of special courts, on which the peasants should be directly represented, which should have power materially to scale down amounts outstanding.

The further need is to provide direct assistance for the cultivators and for the development of agriculture. This can only be done through the State. The peasantry have neither the means nor the facilities to avail themselves of modern implements; and they are too weak economically even to be able to develop rapidly enough on a co-operative basis. The State should make available for the peasantry both cheap credit and also actual depots of agricultural machinery which could be hired out, and actually assist in the development and modernisation of agriculture.

For the instrument through which this assistance to agriculture should be carried out, the National Movement should stand for the establishment and recognition of village councils (equally elected by all the peasants and labourers in a village), which should have wide legal organising functions as well as control of the conditions of land tenure. This last opens the way to combat the evils of "fragmentation" (*i.e.*, the parcelling out of the already tiny holdings into separate, often widely distant, strips, resulting in the maximum waste of labour

and inefficiency of tillage) as well as to prepare the advance towards larger co-operative agriculture.

These would constitute the points of an agricultural programme, which should furnish the basis of National propaganda in the villages, and build up the movement powerfully on the basis of the peasantry.

(*c*) Taxation

The fight against the Budget concentrates the fight against the existing forms and methods of government.

The original Swarajist policy of opposition to all Government expenditure and supply, was sound in principle : the departure from it has been a weakening which has simply reflected the movement of bourgeois interests to identification with Government and Imperialist interests. The combating of all bureaucratic and military expenditure, and therefore the rejection of the Budget as a whole, needs to be maintained.

But the question of the sources of revenue is no less important than the question of supply and expenditure.

Taxation policy reflects most clearly the social basis of a government. It is a canon of taxation that in proportion as taxation is indirect it rests most heavily on the masses of the population (who have to buy the taxed necessaries equally with the rich) and lets off lightly the wealthy and propertied classes. This is particularly the case in countries where a large proportion of the population is constituted by the peasantry. Here a system of indirect taxation amounts to a virtual system of expropriation.

In India, the bulk of the taxation is indirect to an extreme extent. Roughly speaking, direct taxation covers less than one-tenth of the revenue. (in Great Britain direct taxation for the year 1923-24 covered 54 per cent. of the tax revenue.)

The main sources of revenue, for central and provincial governments combined, are returned as follows for 1924-25 (Budget Estimates, "Statesman's Year Book," 1925) :

	Crores* of rupees.
Customs and Excise	64.5
Land	36.0
Railways	29.7
Income Tax	18.3
Stamps	12.9
Salt	9.0
Irrigation	7.2
Opium	4.3

The total revenue, for the central and provincial governments combined, was 210 crores. Thus direct taxation represents less than 9 per cent. of the total.

The general position is seen more clearly if we omit the non-tax revenue of Railways and Irrigation (which are largely balanced by expenditure). We then get the following result :—

	Crores of rupees.
Indirect Taxation (Customs, Excise, Stamps, Salt, Opium)	91 = 63%
Land	36 = 24%
Direct Taxation	18 = 13%

This policy is nothing less than a policy of spoliation against the peasants, against the workers

* A crore is 10,000,000.

and against the small middle classes and professional men with low incomes, for the benefit of the wealthy minority of British and Indian exploiters. The National Movement must carry on an energetic propaganda against this policy. The National programme should demand abolition of all indirect taxation and its replacement by a steeply graduated progressive Income Tax.

(With regard to the question of the use of indirect taxation for the purpose of developing Indian industry by Protection—as often advocated in Nationalist circles—this is a complete policy of exploitation of the Indian people for the benefit mainly of British capitalists. It is a double exploitation : first, in that the burden of duties, falling on all consumers, falls heaviest on the poorest, and, second, that the effect of tariffs is simply to enable the Indian—in fact mainly British—capitalists to raise fantastic profits, by the protected exploitation of the masses of the people. This is not the path to the real development of industry in India for the Indian people).

(*d*) Labour Conditions

According to the statement of Lord Chelmsford in 1922, there are twenty million industrial wage earners in India.

The National Movement as a whole needs to take up actively the fight for the improvement of the conditions of the industrial proletariat. The future of India is bound up with the future of the industrial proletariat, which will necessarily play a more and more important role with the increasing development of industry in India. If the National

Movement is to be built upon the masses, it must voice in the forefront both the demands of the peasants and of the industrial workers.

The existing conditions of the Indian workers are amongst the worst labour conditions in the world. Hours are fixed by law, under the last Factory Amendment Act, at a 60 hour week maximum and an eleven hour day; but even this figure is often exceeded, actual hours worked in many cases reaching from thirteen to fifteen hours per day. The labour of women and children is extensively used in all classes of occupation. The Mines Inspector's Report for 1921 recorded the employment in the mines of 9,949 women and 8,548 children under twelve. In the jute industry, of 319,000 workers in 76 mills, 50,000 are women and 29,000 children. Wages fall commonly even below a bare subsistence level. Records of wages show the average wage of a Bengal coal-miner in 1922 as 12 annas (or 1s.) per day, of an Assam plantation labourer as 4 annas (or 4d) per day, and of Bombay skilled textile workers as 12 annas to rupees 1.8 (or 1s. to 2s.) per day. What these figures mean, even in the case of the better-off Bombay workers, is shown by the enquiry of the Bombay Labour Office into 2,473 working class budgets. The enquiry showed :

1. That no less than 56 per cent. of the income went on food.
2. That even so the quality of food obtained did not reach the prison standard. "The general conclusion is that industrial workers consume the maximum of cereals allowed by the

Famine Code, but less than the diet prescribed in the "Bombay Gaol Manual."

3. That 97 per cent. of the families were living in overcrowded single rooms.
4. That 47 per cent. of the families were in debt.

Alongside these figures may be set the fact that the Bombay mill profits in 1921 showed a total of 153 million rupees, contrasted with a total payment of salaries and wages of 78 million rupees, and representing a net earning on paid-up capital of 63 per cent. (India Year Book, 1924). An analysis of 41 jute mills shows that on a capital of £6,140,000, in the four years 1918-21, dividends were declared of £22,900,000 in addition to nineteen million pounds being placed to reserves, or a total of £42,000,000 profit on £6,000,000 capital in four years.

These are conditions that should arouse the whole National Movement to action. Trade Union organisation is savagely restricted; and strikes have been met not only with the starvation tactics of the employers but in addition by the armed force of the Government. Recent examples of the heroic struggles of the industrial workers will be fresh in the minds of all.

The Government's existing Trade Union legislation is designed to prevent and paralyse the growth of the mass and working class movement. It gives no immunity from civil liability, and therefore leaves the unions at the mercy of the courts in a strike. It expressly restricts the power of the common action of the unions, or even of one union to assist another with funds. Finally, it prohibits completely political action. It thus represents an

attempt to "legalise" trade unions only in the sense of endeavouring to turn them into docile instruments of Government organisation.

The National Movement should support the demands of the workers for: (1) a minimum wage and eight hour day for all wage workers; (2) the abolition of child labour and the prohibition of women's labour in dangerous trades; (3) the establishment of factory protective legislation and workers' compensation on European standards; (4) the establishment of full trade union rights, on the existing English model, and full working class rights of economic and political organisation.

(*e*) Health and Social Conditions

Health, housing and social conditions in India are notoriously among the worst in the world.

Vital statistics show an average expectation of life of 22 years, as against 51 for England, 47 for Germany and 45 for France, *i.e.*, less than half the European standard. This position has grown worse during recent years, despite the niggardly beginnings of social administration. The expectation of life for all ages in the 1911 Census Return was less than in the Return for 1891.

The social condition of the population is revealed in the effects of the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which is now established to have cost 12 million lives, or more than the total death casualities of all the belligerents in the four years of the European War.

Infant mortality reaches a figure of 206 per thousand, as compared with 91 for the United Kingdom. In Bombay the figure actually reached 667 per thousand in 1921.

Housing conditions, particularly in the industrial centres, defy description. In the Bombay one-room tenements, the Medical Officer's Report for 1921 declared that 13 per cent. contained ten or more persons and 73 per cent. of the workers' children are born in these one-room tenements.

Health services and facilities, whether of doctors, hospitals or medical supplies, are bare to the point of non-existence in practice for large areas. For example, in Bengal the hospitals were able to treat, in 1921, 111,000 in-patients, or 2.4 per thousand of the population.

The desperate situation revealed in these figures is deeply rooted in the economic and social conditions of the people, and can only be fundamentally combated by a transformation of the existing economic order. But the provision of such a minimum of health and social legislation as has already been developed in every modern country is an urgent need and should be placed in the forefront of the Nationalist programme.

The National Movement should stand for a free universal medical service and the building up of an adequate system of hospitals, maternity centres and dispensaries. This should be combined with a programme of public health propaganda.

At the same time, housing schemes must be pressed for, which can provide a minimum standard of housing for the industrial workers at a low rent. (The only housing scheme of importance so far developed, that of the Bombay Development Department, fixes the minimum rent of a one-room tenement at 10 rupees a month, which is far beyond the reach of the wages of most workers.)

(f) Education

The existing figure of literacy for India is 7 per cent. With this may be contrasted the figure of 95 per cent. for Japan. The total expenditure on education in 1919-20 was 12.6 million pounds or about 11d. per head of the population as against an expenditure in the United Kingdom of 85 millions or £2 per head. According to Sir M. Visvesvaraya, in "Reconstructing India," "three villages out of four are without a school-house."

The demand for free universal primary education is an indispensable plank for a National platform. The deliberate maintenance of popular ignorance is a heavy charge against the existing administration. While every aspect of education needs to be pressed, universal primary education must take first place.

At the same time technical, secondary and higher education are all vital to national development, and all three require specific attention in any educational programme. Secondary education is heavily starved. Technical education has been extremely meagre in the past, but is beginning to be developed and is likely to be more developed in the future, under the new industrial schemes. University education has been, proportionately to numbers, less deficient than the other branches (about one-fifth of the British proportion to population, and one-tenth of the German); but it has been depressed in standards by mechanical bureaucratic methods and political control, hampered by the difficulty of students having to study in a foreign language, and cut off from the social and productive life of the nation, leading, for a large proportion of the stu-

dents, only to unemployment or trivial clerical labour. The reason for this last position lies in the fact, first, that the necessary school, medical and similar services, which should provide an outlet for the trained qualifications available, are still largely non-existent; second, that the higher positions in all forms of employment are mainly in European hands; and third, that the provision for advanced educational work and research is still very slight. For all these reasons, the adoption of an advanced educational and social programme by the National Movement will help to win the active support of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, who can provide thousands of effective agitators and propagandists.

The question of language needs careful attention. While no encouragement should be given to policies of cultural isolation, it is common experience that education up to and including university standard can only be satisfactorily received in a student's own tongue; and it is not until higher or graduate standards are reached that a transition can be made to other tongues for purposes of wider contact. In the schools, secondary as well as primary, this clearly applies; and the question of "language universities" is worth consideration.

Freedom in education must be fought for. Even in England the hand of bureaucracy is heavy on all unorthodox opinion in schools and universities, or among teachers; and all the more so in India. Education is turned into an instrument of official propaganda. This needs to be fought by the whole power of the National Movement. The National Movement should take up every case of victimisation, defend the civil rights of teachers to organise and take part in political propaganda, and jealously

watch the curricula and text books of authority. The most effective counter-propaganda to official educational position can often only be given outside the schools by special classes, children's groups, youth movements, etc..

The question of education is, in fact, not only a question of a demand from the Government. It goes to the heart of national propaganda. The National Movement can achieve no greater work than, not only to press the demand for education, but actually to take up the task of spreading the beginnings of education in the villages throughout the country by the formation of groups. In this way the National propaganda will be able to strike its roots deeply in the masses and build up a powerful movement to confront the Government machine.

2. Questions of Organisation.

The question now follows: What must be the form of organisation through which a National programme of the kind described can be expressed?

It is clear that a form of organisation is needed which corresponds to the combination of forces in the National Movement. It must be an organisation strongly rooted in the peasants, in the working class, and also in the ranks of the student, professional and small trading class. The more freely these different elements are able to find their distinctive expression and scope within the National Movement, the stronger the National Movement will be. Thus a National organisation may actually be built up most effectively on a basis of peasants' associations and unions, of workers' unions, of young Nationalist groups (including students and young workers) and so forth. These,

linked together in some type of federal democratic association with a strong central leading body, could constitute the framework of a People's Party for the prosecution of the national struggle.

On the exact forms of organisation no hasty answer can be given : for the actual evolution will depend on the process of events and the existing forms out of which the future National organisation must develop.

There exist, both within the Congress and in the Swaraj Party, as well as outside, elements which are seeking for a forward programme, which recognise the dead stop reached by the old lines of leadership and the danger of a complete surrender, but which are still seeking for the right positive line of advance.

In the Congress the strength of such elements is evidenced by the very considerable vote for full independence despite the appeals of all the official leaders for co-operation with the British Empire. This has been still more evident in many of the provincial congresses.

In the Swaraj Party there exists a younger wing of socialistic sympathies. The Swaraj Party contains at present many diverse elements, very largely representative of the existing stage of the Indian Nationalist Movement. On one side may be traced the trend of complete bourgeois policy merging with imperial interests. At the same time there exist younger elements who are feeling their way towards closer alliance with the peasantry and the workers. The expression of these latter may not always be very different from that of the open bourgeois leaders; but the tendency which they

voice represents a new and important phase of the Nationalist Movement.*

* A recent expression of a representative of this wing is worth noting. In September, 1925, Mr. Chaman Lal, a Swarajist member of the Legislative Assembly and also a member of the Council of the Trades Union Congress, declared, in an interview :—

> "We must now begin to think a little more clearly in scientific terms and not content ourselves with merely mouthing visionary ideas. The struggle is before us—not merely a political struggle, but also an economic struggle. The Swaraj Party is doing what it can politically, but the lever of our energy must not be the support of the middle class or the bankers and millionaires, landlords and merchants—but the workers and peasants. We have to wage a ceaseless struggle against Imperialism. We can succeed in that struggle only if we set our minds determinedly to organise the peasants and workers. Mr. Gandhi feels differently. I have tried time and again to convince him. But the Swaraj Party led by our great leader, now dead, thought differently. We must aim at the final victory through a victory of our hungry masses.
>
> "It has become essential now for us to look to the organised workers and peasants for support to our struggle for freedom. The time has come to start a socialist wing of the Swaraj Movement." ("Bombay Chronicle," 2/9/25.)

This statement represents an important advance on the older generation of the Nationalist Movement. The recognition that the real force of the nation and of the National struggle against imperialism lies in the workers and peasants, and not in the capitalist class, is definitely set out : and the aim of a socialist wing of the Swaraj Movement is proclaimed. Nevertheless the break with the old outlook is still incomplete. Once again "we" are to "organise workers and peasants" in order to secure "support in struggle"; "we" are to win "our" victory "through a victory of the hungry masses." The speaker, that is to say, still speaks as a representative of the bourgeoisie; the outlook is still dangerously like the outlook a century ago of the English middle class Reform leaders before 1832, for whom the hungry masses were material and musket-fodder in order to break a way for them to their privileges. What then should be the aim of Left Swaraj? Not simply to argue the usefulness of the masses to the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois national struggle, but instead to see the national struggle as the struggle of the masses, and to endeavour to lead the masses, denouncing without hesitation every treachery of the bourgeoisie and their co-operation with the Imperialists.

At the same time there are elements of working class organisations, of trade unions, of peasant organisations, of socialist groups and of the experiment of the "Labour Party."

Finally, in the revolutionary movement and organisations exist elements of strength, courage and tenacity for the leadership of the national struggle, once they are able to bring their revolutionary energy into contact with the masses and so build up a real and powerful movement of national struggle.

To reach the organisation needed, the first step is that all those elements which are feeling their way towards a mass national movement should clear the ground and draw closer together. Once the lines laid down are clear : (1) that the National Movement must be based upon the masses of the nation ; (2) that the National Movement cannot follow the bourgeois line of co-operation or semi-co-operation with Imperialism, and (3) that the National Movement, as the movement of the masses, must combine the struggle for national liberation with the struggle for the immediate needs of the peasants, the workers and the petty bourgeoisie, then the working out of the consequent line of programme and action can rapidly follow.

The immediate important task, therefore, is to carry on a battle of clarification within the existing movement and organisations. Within both the Congress and the Swaraj Party, the Left Nationalist elements should gather themselves round a popular national programme.

When the time comes, the new forces will have to find their form of organisation and expression. It is a matter of indifference how this will arise,

whether through the existing forms of the Congress and the Swaraj Party or by a combination of these and other elements. It is clear that what will be eventually reached will be some form of People's Party, gathering together the elements of the peasants, the workers and the intelligentsia in the struggle for national liberation.

Such a People's Party may be actually based as already suggested on a combination of diverse forms of organisation, on National propaganda groups and societies, on students' groups, on peasants' unions and on working class organisations. All these, despite their different roles, can play their part in the national struggle.

The line of organisation must reach out to the masses. This necessitates both widespread and continuous agitation, propaganda, demonstrations and campaigns; and at the same time detailed work in the villages and industrial centres all over the country, forming groups and building up peasants' and workers' organisations.

In this connection, some comments on the dying down of popular agitation are worth noting from a leading Nationalist journal. In a leader, entitled "Where are They?" the "Bombay Chronicle" of August 27th, 1925, demanded :—

> "What has happened to the old tradition of public meetings and demonstrations in the country? There is enough of official arrogance and general discontent in the country calling for the healthy ventilation of public feeling, but there is also a widespread notion that you should not condescend to have anything short of thrilling, conclusive action . . . . Lord Birkenhead delivers a

swashbuckling harangue and the Mahatma says that conscious of the country's weakness he is mutely mobilising strength. No speeches, no stirring agitation, no boycott, no burning of any offender's effigy. Those manifestations fail totally with the sombre mood of sheer action which the workers have in their earnestness cultivated and therefore ugly resentment in the public is rolled inwards in noiseless serenity . . . . Public meetings and mass demonstrations must have their place even in the philosophy of the direct actionist but the silence of grim determination is being transformed into ignoble ease and peaceful sloth . . . . The public have lost the sensation of inexorable movement which existed three years ago."

This situation is a very dangerous situation. The comments here given, although they do not attempt to analyse the situation which they describe, are striking evidence from a prominent Nationalist source of the falling away that has taken place in the Nationalist Movement and the weakening in contact with the masses. This outcome is in fact only the inevitable outcome of the policy of bourgeois capitulation.

Only a militant policy can reach out to the masses.

But a militant policy cannot reach out to the masses without mass organisation. The necessary counterpart of a popular programme is widespread mass organisation, propaganda and agitation, and above all the building up of independent social, economic and political organisations of the peasants and workers themselves.

Chapter IX.

LABOUR ORGANISATION

The question of the role of the working class and of labour organisation needs independent consideration. It is not within the scope of the present book to consider in detail the special problems of the working class struggle or organisation in India, but it is essential for the right understanding of the immediate future in India to understand the role of the working class.

The working class will be the leader of the struggle for liberation in India, because the working class alone will carry that struggle through to the ultimate conclusion of social liberation. The social struggle of the working class is the fundamental struggle: the national struggle is only a phase and part of it.

Therefore the independent growth and aim of the working class is of primary importance in India's development.

1. The Role of the Working Class

The historical task of the working class is to free humanity from class divisions and exploitation and inaugurate the new social order based on co-operation.

Why has the working class this task in history? Because the working class constitutes the most exploited class, which alone has no interest in the present order based on property and is therefore the revolutionary force of the future. Capitalism has created the conditions of large-scale organisation, which makes possible the social organisation of production: and capitalism has created at the same time in the proletariat or propertyless industrial workers the new social force which can organise the new order and so free all exploited sections.

For this reason the working class is the natural leader of all the exploited mass. Many forms of class division and exploitation have preceded the form of capitalist and worker, and still cover the largest part of the field in India to-day—forms of feudal privilege, landownership, caste slavery, religious exactions, etc. The relation of capitalist employer and propertyless worker is still comparatively modern in India, and covers only a minority of the population. Nevertheless all previous social forms are already subject to capitalism by the workings of the British conquest: and while the older social forms increasingly decline, capitalism spreads more and more rapidly. Capitalism is thus the dominant form in India also: and it is from capitalism, and not from the earlier social forms, that the new stage must be expected to come.

The victory of the working class means the freeing of all humanity: for there is no remaining class to be freed; and the working class is able to organise the social system of production which is not based on class division or exploitation.

Thus the role of the working class is the decisive role in the present epoch to carry through the

transition from class society to the classless society of the future. In every country the industrial proletariat, though not yet numerous, is the pivot of change and the inevitable leader of the struggle of social liberation.

2. The Working Class as the Future Leader in India

Does the role of the working class apply also to the future of India? Is the working class the inevitable future leader in India?

To this question the answer No is still often given. The future leadership of the working class in India is not yet understood.

The arguments in support of this denial follow along lines familiarised in the experience of other countries. It is argued firstly that capitalist development in India is still an open question and not inevitable; secondly, that the peasant basis of Indian society gives it a peculiar character which will separate it from the lines of capitalist development and class struggle; thirdly, that the "spiritual" character of Indian civilisation excludes the possibility of class struggle; fourthly, that the workers are illiterate and ignorant and only capable of being led and helped by the educated classes; and, finally, for all the above reasons, that "Western European" notions of Labour organisation and socialism are inapplicable to India, or at any rate that it is premature to talk of their application.

These beliefs are based on traditions and sentiments which no longer correspond to realities in India. Capitalism in India is already far advanced. The industrialisation of India is the keystone of

modern economic and political policy. The class struggle has reached the most extreme intensity in the past half dozen years. The peasantry are becoming more and more "proletarianised" by the workings of capitalism, and forced into the field of social struggle. The only leadership for the scattered forces of the peasantry is to be found in the only progressive revolutionary class—the industrial proletariat. All these facts point with absolute certainty to the future hegemony of the working class in India.

This controversy has already been fought out on a classic scale thirty years ago, in a country bearing close analogies to Indian social conditions—Russia. There the Populists put forward very much the same ideas as are still fashionable in many Nationalist circles in India. They denied that capitalism and the class struggle could play an important role in Russia, and declared that Russia would develop in a unique manner, on the basis of peasant small proprietorship and village communes. At that time the Marxists, led by Plekhanov and Lenin, fought an uphill battle to demonstrate that the reality of capitalism was already beginning in Russia and bound to expand at a tremendous pace, and that therefore the role of the industrial proletariat alone presented a compact and revolutionary force which could lead the peasantry in the common struggle against political and social exploitation. But the course of history established the correctness of their view; and from the small workers' groups, then initiated, have developed the powerful governing and leading force which has been able

to establish and maintain the free Workers' and Peasants' Republic of to-day.

It is an amazing example of the intellectual isolation which it has been the policy of Imperialism to foster in India that every one of the exploded Populist errors, of thirty years ago in Russia, should be revived to-day in Nationalist circles in India.

The signals in India are a hundred times clearer than they were in Russia thirty years ago. Capitalism has reached a much more advanced stage of development; the class struggle has reached a more intense point. The development of large-scale industry of the most modern European or American type is already visible, with all its consequences. The impoverishment and revolutionising of the peasantry is even clearer in India than it was in Russia. A stage has even been reached, in the political situation since 1922, in which the discrediting of the bourgeoisie for leadership, and their collapse in the face of the developing social struggle have already become evident. The whole situation is pointing more and more clearly to the future role of the working class, which will lead and organise the peasantry in the common struggle for emancipation.

There is, of course, no question here of any sudden transition of India from its existing backward social conditions to a communist society. A whole series of stages of economic development will be needed in order to reach this. But what conditions already point to is the future role of the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, to win power in order to carry out the economic transition.

The British bourgeoisie is clearly aware of this possibility. It is worth noting that their discussions of the Indian question often show a clear appreciation of the national struggle as at bottom a social struggle; and indeed they even try to use this possibility—the possibility that the national struggle will rapidly develop into a wider social struggle—in order to frighten the Indian bourgeoisie from participation in the national movement. A striking example of this class appeal from the British bourgeoisie to the Indian bourgeoisie is to be found in the following quotation from the "Times" leader columns, which is a very clear expression of the official view :—

> "There is a further consideration that must be at least subconsciously present to the minds of most of the advocates of immediate Swaraj. Anything like a real revolution would have most disastrous effects on the very class that is now represented on the Legislative Assembly and Provincial Councils, for among the ignorant masses of India a political revolution would become a social revolution in a very short time."
>
> ("Times," 13/3/24.)

Similarly Sir Malcolm Hailey, in the Legislative Assembly, in explaining the Government's reason for rejecting the Swarajist proposal of a Round Table Conference, declared that :

> "The Government has opposed a Round Table Conference because it appeared to ignore the fact that the British Government was the arbiter . . . . It would inevitably be followed by mass agitation. Experience of movements of that kind in India made it doubtful whether any

leader could control the forces he had raised. They might sow the wind, but their successors would reap the whirlwind."

The significance of these statements for the real forces of the political situation in India, which are opposed to Imperialism and which the Imperialists fear, should be clear to every Nationalist.

The role of the working class is the key to the future of India.

3. The Working Class and Politics

The role of the working class and the complete separation of their interests from the capitalist class, determines the character of their organisation.

Working class organisation needs to be completely independent, both economically and politically.

The workers need organisation, both for their immediate needs and protection in the daily class struggle, and also for their role of leadership in the national and social struggle for liberation. Both these aims require independence of programme and organisation, even at the same time as the workers play their part in the wider national movement.

In order to lead the working masses to victory and carry out the final aim of social liberation the workers need to win political power. This conquest of political power is the necessary obligation of all working class organisation and policy.

The attempt is sometimes made to relegate working class organisation to the economic sphere, and to suggest that the working class need have no

concern with politics, or should leave politics to the National Movement. This conception is still prevalent within the Indian working class movement, and is extremely dangerous.

In the Presidential Address to the 1925 Trades Union Congress we find the following :—

> "A question might be asked—Why have we this session of the All Indian Trades Union Congress when a premier national body like the Indian Nationalist Congress is fighting the cause of the whole of India? The answer is easy. The Indian Nationalist Congress has to fight with a foreign bureaucracy which virtually constitutes the Government of this country for the freedom of the people, while workers have to fight for our economic emancipation with exploiters of all kinds. The work of the Indian Nationalist Congress is mainly political while ours is mainly economic."

With this may be compared the statement of R. K. Das, in his book "The Labour Movement in India" :—

> "The object of the Labour Movement is to solve primarily the economic problems, and, secondarily, to look after the social and political interests."

Again in the statement of the Chairman of the Reception Committee to the Congress we find the advocacy of "neutrality" in politics :—

> "As there is a divergence of opinion regarding the conduct of political agitation and movement I think that labour organisations should not directly side with any particular party."

All these statements have one common conception at bottom : namely, that the interests of the workers are confined to limited, immediate, economic interests, and do not extend to political questions of government; and that the workers should leave political questions alone (be "neutral," leave to the Congress, treat as secondary, etc.), *i.e,* leave them to the bourgeoisie.

This conception needs to be vigorously combated. No question more directly concerns and affects the workers than the question of Government.

The aims of the workers of economic improvement cannot receive any substantial realisation within the framework of bourgeois domination. It is therefore illusory to put forward the aim of economic improvement without relation to the conquest of political power. The workers are directly interested in the question of political power from their own point of view, and therefore they are directly interested in the national struggle. The immediate economic aims can only represent working class interests when they are accompanied by and subordinated to the supreme political aim.

To urge on the workers concentration on limited economic aims, to the exclusion or subordination of the political aim, is to urge on the workers acceptance of their own subjection.

This question has also received classic treatment in the history of the Russian movement, where the conception of limiting the aims of working class organisation to the immediate economic struggle was designated "Economism." The account of it in Zinoviev's history of the Russian Communist

Party is so important that it is worth quoting at some length :

"While correctly laying emphasis upon immediate economic demands, some of the active workers, who in reality only chanced to be travelling along with us at the time, Mensheviks of the future, twisted the conception of economism to mean that the workers ought not to interest themselves in anything save narrow economic questions; all the rest, they said, was no concern of the workers, they had no understanding of it; and it was necessary to speak to them only of things immediately affecting them, *i.e.*, of economic demands alone. And thus the word "economist" came into existence. It was not applied to specialists in economic science, but to those who maintained that it was necessary to speak to the workers of nothing beyond . . . . fines, and similar matters. The economists even went so far as to deny the necessity of struggle against the autocracy. They said : "The workers do not understand this; we shall frighten them away if we come to them with the slogan : Down with the autocracy!" Developing and deepening their views the economists finally evolved the following "division of labour" : the liberal bourgeoisie were to occupy themselves with politics, and the workers with the struggle for economic betterment.

"What does this all mean? Again and once again— an absolute lack of understanding of the role of the working class as hegemony. The intention of the Marxists was not in the least that hours and wages should be forgotten. Both

comrade Lenin and the Union for Struggle for the Liberation of the Workers understood this. Of course, we wanted to raise the wages and improve the conditions of the workers, but in our estimation this was not enough; we wanted the workers to govern the State, to be its masters and its rulers. And—we said—there is no question in which the working class should not take an interest—above all, the question of the Czarist autocracy, which directly concerns them. We stand for the hegemony of the proletariat, and we shall not allow the workers to be driven into the burrow of petty economic demands."

This passage deserves careful study in the present stage of the Indian Labour movement.

The old British working class movement was founded on the basis of immediate economic aims without reference to any wider political aim of the conquest of power. They thought by this means they could most rapidly win practical economic improvement, and therefore they left political questions to the bourgeoisie, which meant that they became allies of Imperialism. What was the result? For a period they were able to win a measure of improvement by this means, but only for a privileged minority of the workers, and at the expense of the workers all over the world, from whose Imperialist exploitation their improvement in fact came. But as soon as Imperialism began to break up, even this partial advantage began to disappear; and the course of events has completely demonstrated the falsity of this initial conception. For the past twenty-five years, the economic standards of the British workers have gone downward. To-

day the British working class movement is having very painfully and slowly to correct its error and adapt itself to the political struggle for power, at an extremely difficult stage.

The Russian working class movement on the other hand, which came later into the field, with the benefit of previous experience and Marxist training and leadership, was able from the first to set before itself the aim of political power. The Russian workers had to go through very hard struggles, but they have to-day outstripped the other workers in the conquest of power (as the British working class leaders have themselves recognised, in the Report of the British Trade Union Delegation to Russia) and the economic position of the Russian workers, alone of the workers of the world, is now advancing.

The Indian working classs movement, which is now able to start on the basis of full world experience, can from the outset put before itself the aim of the conquest of political power, and combine the daily economic struggle with this aim.

To accomplish this aim of the conquest of political power the workers require appropriate organisation. The trade unions are not enough in view of this aim. There is needed a revolutionary workers' party which shall organise and centralise the struggle for the conquest of political power. The aim of such a party needs to be, not simply the capture of a few seats in some legislative assembly, but the leadership of the working class struggle at every stage. The party of the workers and the trade unions alike needs to be based upon the programme and policy of the class struggle

and to work in closest co-operation. It is the province of the trade unions to organise the widest masses of the workers. It is the province of the party to organise the most militant and self-sacrificing elements of the working class, who are capable of giving leadership to the whole of their class. The achievement of such a revolutionary workers' party is the supreme point of working class organisation, and the necessary condition of reaching to the workers' society of the future.

Chapter X.

INDIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING CLASS

Modern Imperialism is based on the subjection of two social forces, which together are destined to overthrow it—the working class at home and the subject nations abroad. It is obvious that the struggle of these two elements against Imperialism is a common struggle, and their interest a common interest.

Imperialism, which is a world force, cannot be fought effectively on the basis of a single country. This is a lesson which is being learnt to-day both by the working class in the Imperialist countries and by the national movement in the subject countries. It is a lesson which carries very important political consequences for both.

1. The World Struggle Against Imperialism

The relations of Indian Nationalism with movements and forces outside India have gone through a series of changes. These changes correspond closely to the stage of development and social character of the national movement.

In the early days, when the Nationalist Movement was consciously under the tutelage of the British bourgeoisie, prominent attention was given

by the Congress to the policy of conducting propaganda in Britain, chiefly in liberal circles, *i.e.*, to appealing to the sympathy of the British bourgeoisie, and endeavouring to persuade them of the justice and desirability of the national cause.

In reaction against this servility, the Extremists attacked and abolished the whole existing policy of foreign propaganda. This action represented a very important stage of development. It expressed the will to break with the tutelage and protection of the British bourgeoisie and enter on a struggle for full independence.

This decision reflected the transition of Indian Nationalism from the old limited stage in the direction of a mass movement. The new leaders of Indian Nationalism wished to show the ability of the Indian nation to stand on its own feet.

But the decision to break with the leading strings of the British bourgeoisie and conduct a militant national struggle can only be carried out if the national movement is based upon new social forces, which are divorced in interest from the British bourgeoisie. These social forces must lie (as the whole outcome of the foregoing sections has indicated) in the masses of the Indian people, that is to say in the masses of the peasants, the workers and the petty bourgeoisie. Once, however, the national movement is able to develop consciously as a mass movement of struggle against Imperialism, it will at once find a new alignment, and new allies and sources of strength, in the corresponding mass movements of emancipation, both working-class and national, all over the world. Imperialism cannot be overcome single-handed; and closely linked as are the counter-revolutionary interests and the

Imperialist forces, no less closely linked are the interests of the working class and subject nations.

A new epoch of world history has begun in the period after the War. Imperialism which is the most advanced form of capitalism has reached the stage of increasing break-up since 1914. The Russian revolution was the first collapse of an Imperialist power, and the first complete freeing both of the workers and of the subject nations within it. From this victory, a tremendous impetus has been given to the struggle within all the remaining Imperialist dominions. The conflicts and antagonisms of the Imperialist powers, which are the sign of their break-up, continue to develop on an increasing scale. It is clear that conditions are now present for working class and national liberation.

A chain of great colonial struggles has begun in the present period. The victory of Turkish Nationalism over the spoliation plans of the Versailles imperialists was the first sign of the new period. There has followed the tremendous Chinese national movement, and the struggles for independence in Morocco and Syria.

European bourgeois writers have begun to speak, with their usual foolishness, of the Revolt of Asia and Africa and supposed menaces to "White" Civilisation. This is, of course, nonsense, equally as much as the attacks these same writers make on the rise of the working class in their own countries. In either case, what is taking place is no mysterious menace or conspiracy, but a very simple process of millions of human beings endeavouring to free themselves from an existing subjection (a subjection that these same bourgeois

writers would protest against very vociferously, if placed under it themselves).

The "White civilisation" of which these writers speak does not mean the existence and livelihood of the millions of workers and peasants in Europe, who have their own problems to face, but means simply a certain system of subjection and exploitation established by force in Asia and Africa, and established also over the workers and peasants of capitalist Europe.

But what these Imperialist writers do correctly sense, and what raises this alarm is the development of a world movement of National liberation against Imperialism, which is finding its sure path to victory in alliance with the world movement of the working class. This is the key to the present period of world history.

In China the new period began from this fact, that by the Russian revolution the former Tsarist power, which had been one of the foremost Imperialist powers preying on China was replaced by the Soviet Republic, which at once took its stand, plainly and unequivocally, as the friend and ally of a free national China. The Soviet Republic, by renouncing all the Tsarist treaties, which had been extorted by force from China, and by voluntarily surrendering all the previous Imperialist privileges and special rights accruing under these treaties, not only raised its own share of the yoke from China, but by that action stimulated the whole national movement and laid an unanswerable question before all the Imperialist powers, who had been busy planning the partition of China. From this point (although the greatest struggles are still

to come) the retreat of Imperialism in China has begun.

In Morocco, the position is equally significant in another way. Here, for the first time, a colonial people, fighting for their freedom, have received the full and organised support of the working class in the Imperialist country. The French working class movement, led by the French Communist Party, has proved itself the ally, in word and action, of the Moroccan struggle for national liberation. The heavy hand of the French Government against the Party, no less than the reports of the French military and political offices, bear witness to the effectiveness of that help. This is a new phenomenon of incalculable significance for the future. The crushing of the Moroccan struggle in blood is another black page in the book of Imperialism, but it is an issue that is not final. In Africa, too, the tide will soon turn, and the retreat of the Imperialist invaders begin.

All these events point to a new alignment, the gradual development of a world anti-Imperialist bloc of national movements and the world working class.

This is of great importance to Indian Nationalism, which has to contend with the most powerful Imperialism in the world.

The ally of Indian Nationalism in the struggle against Imperialism is the international working class.

2. India and the British Working Class

If the interests of India and the British working class are closely allied, the interests of India and

the British working class are of necessity even closer and more intimately associated.*

This identity of interests, which is of cardinal importance to both, has in the past been obscured for a number of reasons.

On the one hand, the British working class has for half a century past, owing to a shortsighted view of its interests, allowed itself to be identified with the Imperialist powers of its masters. The British workers followed the mistaken policy, which has already been discussed in the previous chapter, of endeavouring to secure an immediate advantage along the line of co-operation with their masters; and in this case the line of co-operation led into the jungle of Imperialism. The Empire was looked upon as a source of economic advantage: the British workers accepted for themselves a superior position to the other workers and did not trouble much about the lot of the coloured workers. This period is already fast reaching its close, and the mistakes of the past are being heavily punished; but the fruits of these mistakes still remain and make difficult the position to-day.

It is true that this applies mainly to the upper strata of the workers. The section of skilled British workers who did, for a period, throw in their lot with the British bourbeoisie was only a small section. And even of this aristocracy of Labour, it was in the main the leadership that was drawn into the circles of the bourgeoisie, by a hundred processes of skill and cunning on the part of the bourgeoisie. It is

* Consideration of the special questions of British Labour policy in relation to India is given in the Preface to the present edition.

the outlook of this leadership that is mainly expressed through the official Labour Party to-day. The mass of the workers, as they are awakening to their own struggle, are awakening at the same time to the unity of their struggle with the struggle of the workers of every race in every part of the Empire. But the evil that exists in the old traditions, and still dominates the machine of the organised movement, is a heavy obstacle to this unity.

On the other hand, Indian Nationalism in the past has been strongly bourgeois in character. This has had a whole series of effects, which have prevented any alliance. In the first place, it has led to the alienation of much working class opinion in England, which has suspected the predominance of rich landowners and merchants in the Nationalist Movement, and not seen the struggle of the masses behind. In the second place, it has led the older Indian Nationalism to look down upon the working class movement as of secondary importance, thus failing to see the real social forces of the future. Thirdly, and most seriously, it has led to a fundamentally false approach to the national question as an absolutely abstract question without regard to class distinctions; to a conception, that is to say, of a single British "nation" of rulers and a single Indian "nation" of ruled. Such a conception inevitably blocks the way to a real understanding of the social forces of the situation. Its falsity is immediately apparent, if we present to ourselves a single concrete picture of some starving unemployed worker in London, touting for a copper before the car of some rich Indian prince or merchant, in front of the Savoy

Hotel, and ask ourselves which is the "ruler" and which is the "ruled."

For all these reasons, the Indian national movement has failed in the past to understand the importance, and significance to its own future, of the working class movement in Britain.

But of all the obstacles that have stood in the way of an effective alliance of the Indian national struggle and the British working class, the heaviest is the record of the Labour Party, in office and in opposition, and this obstacle must be frankly recognised and faced, before any real progress can be made.

Many leaders of the Labour Party, who are still able to hold strong positions, are hand in glove with the Imperialists, and thus misrepresent the British working class before the world. The Labour Government of 1924 behaved as a Conservative government in relation to India; they threw aside the promises and resolutions of Labour Party Conferences, refused even to negotiate with Indian Nationalism, employed methods of coercion and violent suppression, and finally sanctioned the terrorist Bengal Special Ordinances (against the opposition, be it stated, of two of the ex-Liberals in the Cabinet). Since then the behaviour of these same leaders in opposition has followed along similar lines, and, after the year 1925 India Debate, Lord Birkenhead, the Conservative Secretary of State, was able to claim that he had the support of "all parties" for his policy of the iron hand.

It is important to recognise, however, that this policy does not represent the working class.

All this is a mere reflection of Imperialist policy, through agents of theirs, who still hold positions

of power within the working class movement but is no indication of the real forces of the working class. The passing of this group of Imperialist leaders is as inevitable as the passing of the old Liberal-Labour group which preceded them. A complete change in British working class conditions is leading to a rapid and inevitable change in policy.

The Empire, which was previously a source of limited advantage to a section of the working class, is now becoming a source of impoverishment and weakness to all sections, including the former aristocracy of Labour. The new policy of Imperial development, which receives its clearest exemplification in the policy of the industrialisation of India, means the increasing transference of British capitalist enterprise from Britain to new countries all over the world, where large-scale machine industry is now being built on a basis of cheap labour, at the expense of the British working class. The British workers find themselves increasingly faced with unemployment, industrial stagnation, deadly competition of lower standards, and consequent successive capitalist offensives for cutting wages and lengthening hours. The standards of all the British workers have gone down, and those of the skilled workers, who formerly held the favoured position, most of all. For this reason the British workers are compelled, by the force of facts, to recognise their identity of interest with the workers all over the Empire, and even to begin to take the lead in organising the coming struggle.

It is inevitable that a complete transformation will take place in British working class policy. In the coming period, British working class policy will become more and more clearly anti-imperialist

in character. Signs of this change are already visible, as the new situation and the real alignment of interests are becoming understood. At the Trades Union Congress at Scarborough in 1925 the following resolution was overwhelmingly passed :

"This Trades Union Congress believes that the domination of non-British peoples by the British Government is a form of capitalist exploitation having for its object the securing for British capitalists (1) of cheap sources of raw materials ; (2) the right to exploit cheap and unorganised labour and to use the competition of that labour to degrade the workers' standards in Great Britain.

"It declares its complete opposition to Imperialism, and resolves : (1) to support the workers in all parts of the British Empire, to organise the trade unions and political parties in order to further their interests, and (2) to support the right of all peoples in the British Empire to self-determination, including the right to choose complete separation from the Empire."

This resolution was carried by 3,082,000 votes to 79,000. It is true that the carrying of this resolution reflects only the pressure of the rank and file (the resolution was sponsored by the Minority Movement, the Left Wing body in the trade unions), and the dominant policy of the official leadership remains completely in opposition to it. But the wide support to a resolution of this character is a portent of the future.

The Indian National movement will therefore do well to distinguish between the official expressions of the Labour Party, which are at present con-

trolled by the dominant group of Imperialist leaders and the real forces of the working class struggle in Britain, which are developing very rapidly, with increasing revolutionary intensity and with increasing clearness of opposition to all British capitalism and Imperialism. These are finding their expression to-day in the new forces which are growing up in the British working class movement, and in particular in the Minority Movement in the trade unions, in the organised Left Wing in the Labour Party, and in the Communist Party, all of which are committed to a definite anti-imperialist policy and to full support of the subject peoples in their struggle against British rule. The British working class can only achieve its own freedom in conjunction with all the peoples who are subject to the British bourgeois yoke, and is therefore destined to play a decisive role as their fellow-fighter in the struggle against British Imperialism.

This alliance of the British working class and the Indian national revolutionary struggle is, on the international field, the most important immediate outcome of the Marxist analysis which provided the original starting point of the present consideration of the Indian national problem.

> "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the elements of the new society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the present ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Indians themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

THE END.

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